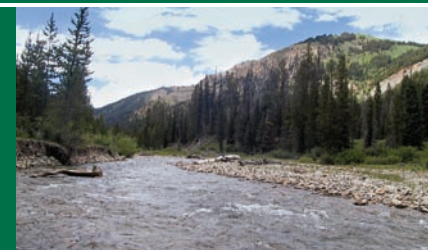
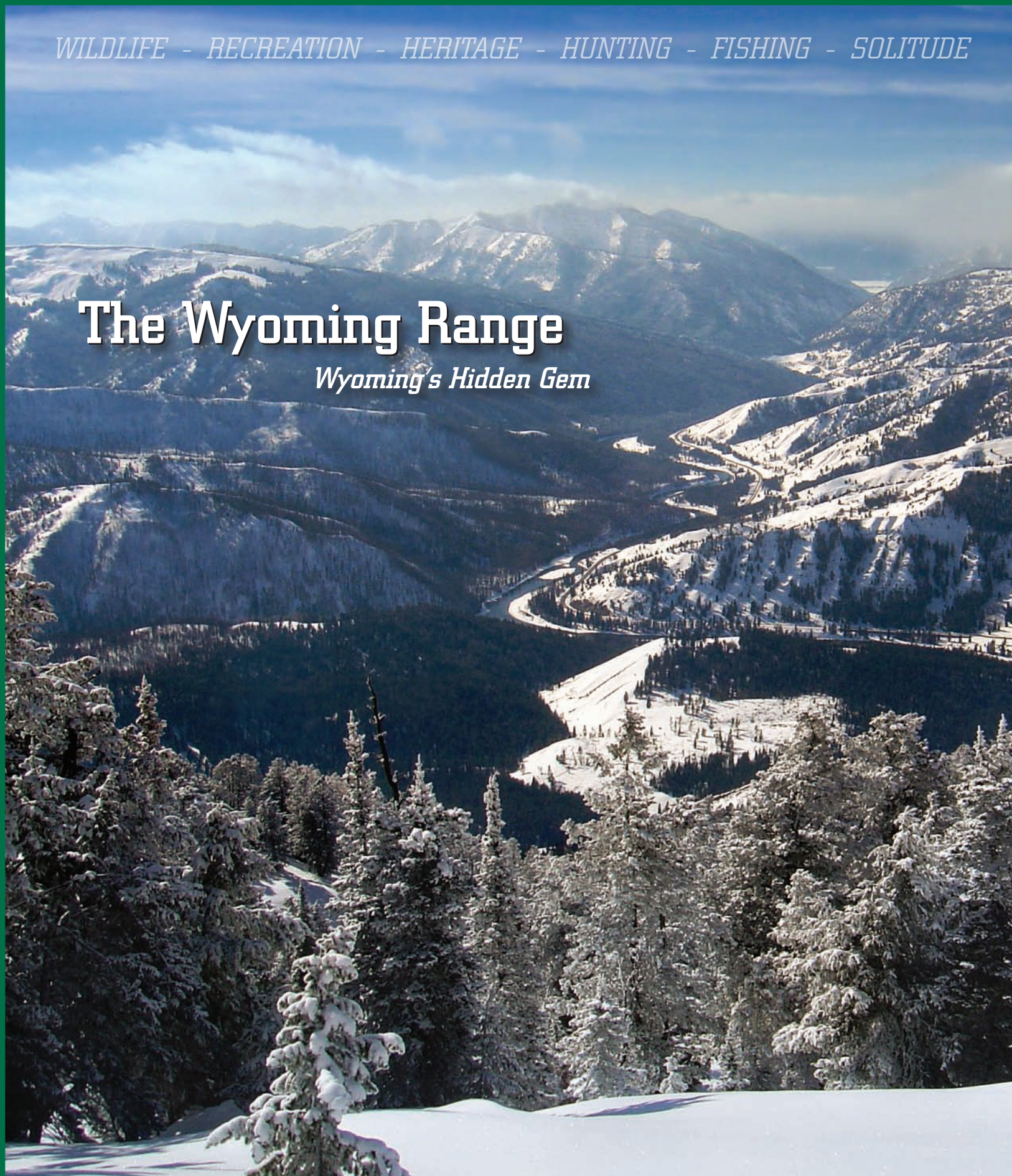


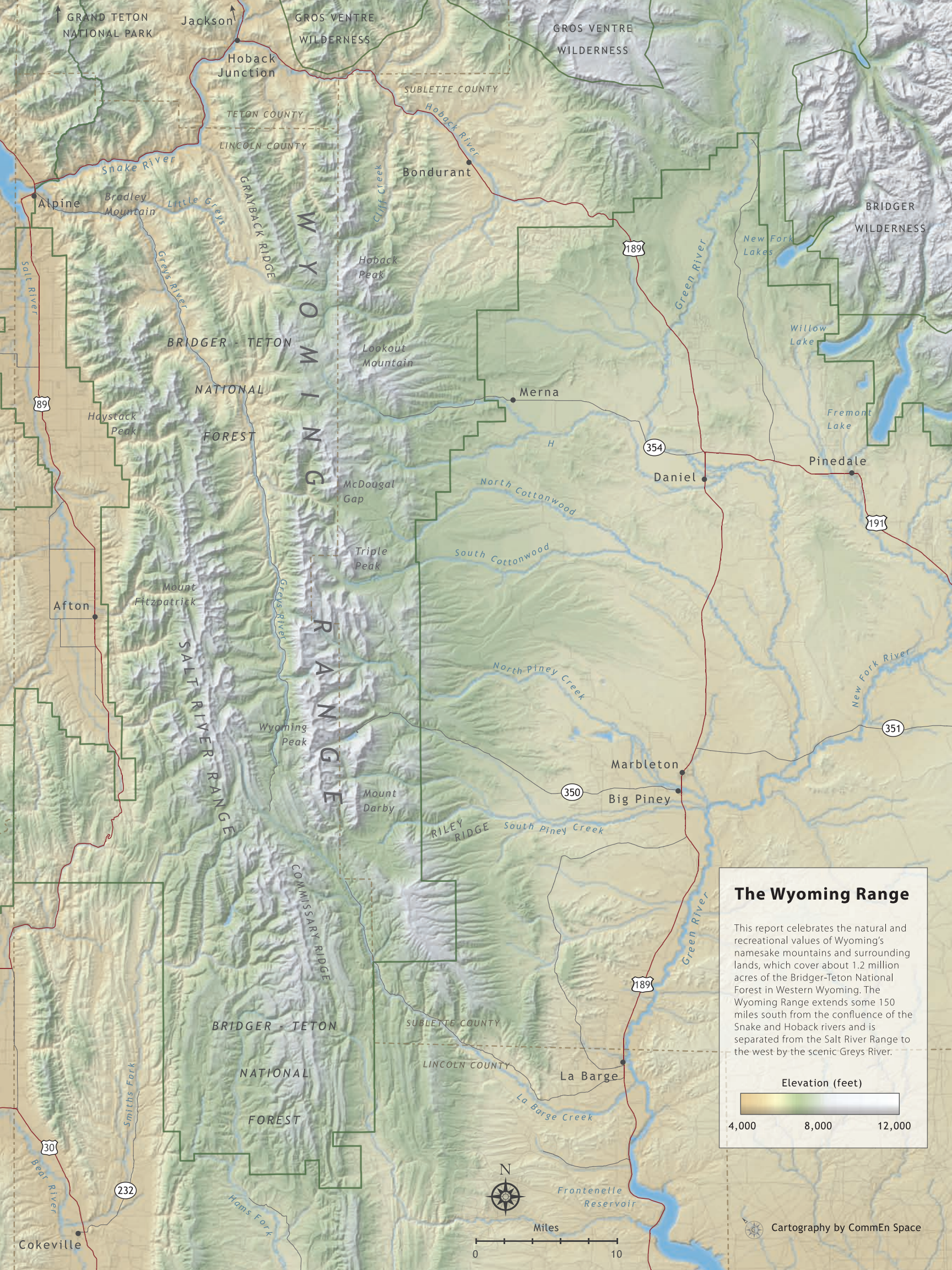
WILDLIFE - RECREATION - HERITAGE - HUNTING - FISHING - SOLITUDE

# The Wyoming Range

*Wyoming's Hidden Gem*

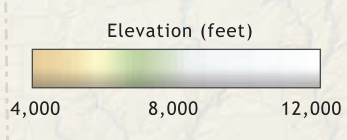






## The Wyoming Range

This report celebrates the natural and recreational values of Wyoming's namesake mountains and surrounding lands, which cover about 1.2 million acres of the Bridger-Teton National Forest in Western Wyoming. The Wyoming Range extends some 150 miles south from the confluence of the Snake and Hoback rivers and is separated from the Salt River Range to the west by the scenic Greys River.





# The Wyoming Range

## *Wyoming's Hidden Gem*

Preface: A Landscape Worthy of Celebration .....	2-3
Introduction: A Portrait of Wyoming's Namesake Mountains .....	4-5
History: Exploration, Hard Work and Adventure .....	6-7
Ecology: A Critical Link in a Great Ecological Chain .....	8-9
Wildlife: Prime Habitat for Wyoming's Big Game .....	10
Watershed: Safe Haven for Native Trout .....	11-13
Hunting and Fishing: A World-class Destination .....	14-16
Recreation: Western Wyoming's Outdoor Playground .....	17-19
Roadless Areas: Instilling a Sense of Place .....	20-21
Economy: The People's Mountain Range .....	22-24
Oil and Gas: Energy Development in the Wyoming Range .....	25-26
Choosing a Future: Help Chart a Course for the Wyoming Range .....	27
Acknowledgements and Sources .....	28-29

## Tables and Charts

Wild and Scenic Eligible Streams .....	13
Big Game Harvest Data, 2004 .....	16
Recreation Corridors .....	19
Roadless Areas .....	21
Travel Spending in Sublette County .....	22
Wildlife Related Economic Benefits .....	24

## Maps

Overview Map .....	inside front cover
Cutthroat Trout Populations .....	11
Wild and Scenic Eligible Streams .....	12
Big Game Habitat .....	16
Recreation Features .....	19
Roadless Areas .....	21

### ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

Where Mountains Meet: Mountaineer Thomas Turiano shot this image while skiing on the west face of Grayback Ridge. This view down the Snake River Canyon shows the northwestern end of the Wyoming Range and the Bailey Creek drainage on the left. Note the difference in topography between the Wyoming Range's broad, low-angled Elk Mountain in the middle ground and beyond it, Bradley Mountain, the Snake River Range's southern-most peak often assumed to be part of the Salt River Range. In the distance lies the Caribou Range.

## *Preface:* A Landscape Worthy of Celebration

**T**he Wyoming Range is one of Wyoming's unsung natural gems. In addition to alpine scenery and exceptional recreational opportunities, this 150-mile range provides important wildlife habitat in the southern reaches of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Prized herds of big game, populations of native cutthroat trout, threatened predators, and rare bird species rely on the Wyoming Range's forested highlands, sage-covered foothills and pure water for survival. These lands also support a traditional ranching lifestyle on the open range. While tourist crowds descend on nearby National Parks and Wilderness areas, these mountains provide places for local residents to explore, hunt and fish.

But more and more these days, as demand for natural gas keeps rising, the energy industry is crossing paths with America's natural treasures in the Rocky Mountain West. Special out-of-the-way places, such as the Wyoming Range, are increasingly in the crosshairs. Energy companies are pressuring federal land managers to lease and drill parts of this range, though finding natural gas riches here is doubtful. In the rush to drill, priceless natural values can be easily overlooked.

**Wyoming Range: Wyoming's Hidden Gem** is our attempt to recognize values that don't fit neatly into cost-benefit tables: free-roaming big game, native trout, healthy forests, pure water, alpine scenery and



*Our vision for the Wyoming Range is to keep intact the traditional uses – the ranching, outfitting, education and recreation activities – that currently occur in this wild country and help sustain local communities.*



solitude. This report tells the story of the Wyoming Range from the perspectives of those who know it well, people such as outfitter Sam Young, mountaineer Thomas Turiano, Pinedale angler Sam Sharp, big game biologist Scott Smith, and former Sublette County Commissioner Gordon Johnston.

As this report makes clear, the Wyoming Range's real treasure is the landscape itself, something residents and visitors to this magnificent range stand to lose if major energy development happens here. Our vision for the Wyoming Range is to keep intact the traditional uses—the ranching, outfitting, education and recreation activities—that currently occur in this wild country and help sustain local communities.



## About The Wilderness Society

The Wilderness Society, a national conservation group dedicated to science-based advocacy, prepared this report to celebrate the Wyoming Range's singular place in our common heritage. For more than 70 years, our group has worked to conserve America's unparalleled wildland heritage and ensure the wise and balanced management of our public lands legacy.

To help forge broad consensus for protecting our natural heritage, our Northern Rockies Regional office has partnered with scientists, policy experts and grassroots groups, such as the Upper Green River Valley Coalition, based near the Wyoming Range in Pinedale. Our work is designed to show how national policies play out in states like Wyoming, rich in both energy resources and natural wonders. While we believe energy development has a place on

our public lands, some places are simply inappropriate. In other locations, drilling should only happen at the right pace and with appropriate safeguards to protect the West's clean air and water, abundant wildlife, and healthy communities. By working to ensure the development of sound policy in the nation's capital, highlighting better alternatives, and partnering with local citizens to watchdog projects, The Wilderness Society believes we can have energy development without diminishing our nation's treasures.

To learn more about The Wilderness Society's work in Wyoming, call our Northern Rockies regional office in Bozeman, Montana, at 406-586-1600 or email us at [bozeman@tw.s.org](mailto:bozeman@tw.s.org).

Peter Aengst  
*Energy Campaign Coordinator*

Bob Ekey  
*Northern Rockies Regional Director*



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

photo: Scott Bosse



## *Introduction:* **A Portrait of Wyoming's Namesake Mountains**

**T**he Wyoming Range is an isolated string of peaks rising from sloping foothills and vast sagebrush plains in western Wyoming. These mountains are a surprise, a shadowy silhouette on the horizon tucked away from major highways. Those who venture into its reaches discover one of Wyoming's finest collections of natural treasures – creeks plunging over spectacular falls, pristine high lakes, open meadows and rust-colored peaks up to 11,363 feet in elevation.

The Wyoming Range is a special place to the people who know it best. This has been true for thousands of years, beginning with the Shoshone Indians and continuing through to the fur trappers and mountain men who traded at summer Rendezvous. Emigrants traveled across the mountains' lower elevations, timber from its forests helped build the Union Pacific Railroad, and towns eventually sprung up nearby, their agricultural base dependent on the range for summer grazing. People's lives in this part of the west have always been deeply threaded into the Wyoming Range.

Today, residents of nearby communities such as Big Piney and Bondurant make a living from outfitting,

guiding or grazing in the range. But the mountains are also where locals and visitors experience a wide variety of recreational activities. When crowds flock to the nearby Wind River Range or Jackson's various hot spots, the Wyoming Range remains a place of escape, where you can experience the silence and solitude of wild country. Here the scenery rivals any national park. And even though it's remote, a network of roads and trails make the range accessible.

For wildlife, the Wyoming Range is equally valuable. Some of the the nation's largest big game herds inhabit the range, supporting world-famous hunting. The range is a stronghold for native cutthroat trout, and could become one for lynx and wolverine. And it harbors the kind of habitat that could support grizzly populations.

### **The Wyoming Range at a Glance:**

- Rugged chain of mountains running north to south for 150 miles in western Wyoming, encompassing nearly 700,000 acres.
- Largest roadless area in Bridger-Teton National Forest and part of the largest roadless complex in Wyoming.
- Only range in Wyoming with four species of native cutthroat trout and one of the few remaining strongholds for Colorado River cutthroat.
- World-class hunting for mule deer, elk and moose. Contains half of Wyoming's moose population, as well as key habitat for the state's largest mule deer population.
- Popular recreation area for camping, hiking, ORV, snowmobiling and mountain biking.
- Provides habitat for grizzly, wolf, wolverine and lynx.
- Travel spending in surrounding communities reached over \$20 million in 2004.

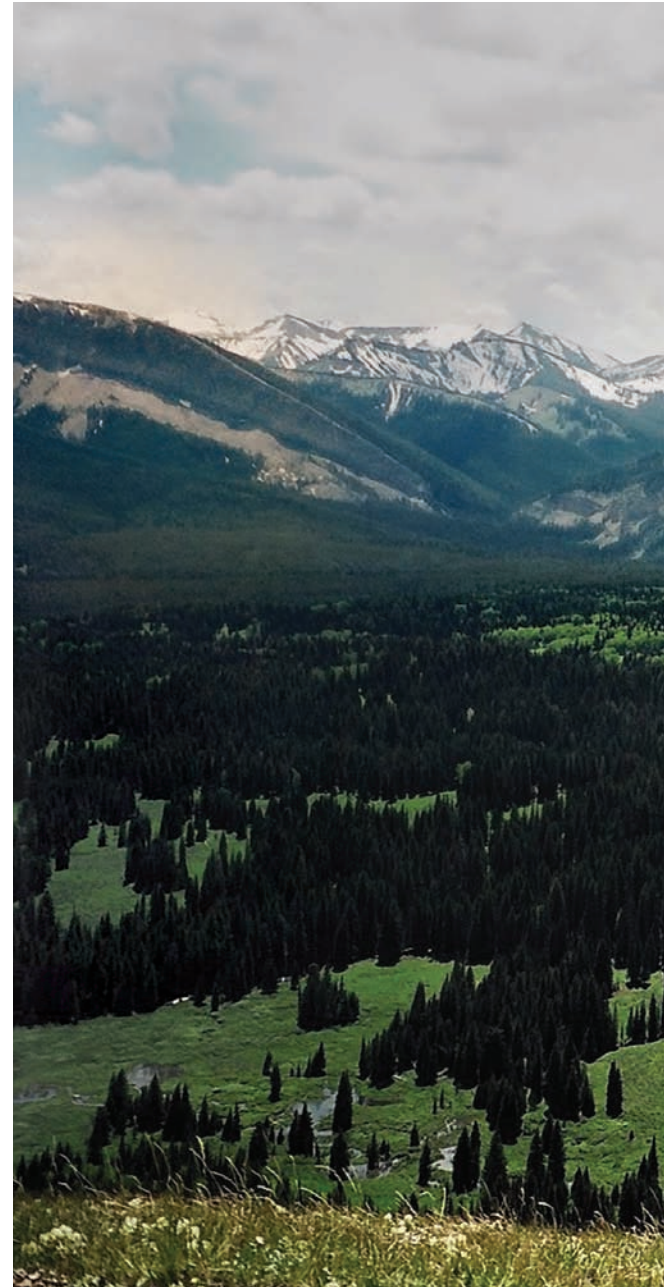


photo: Lloyd Dorsey

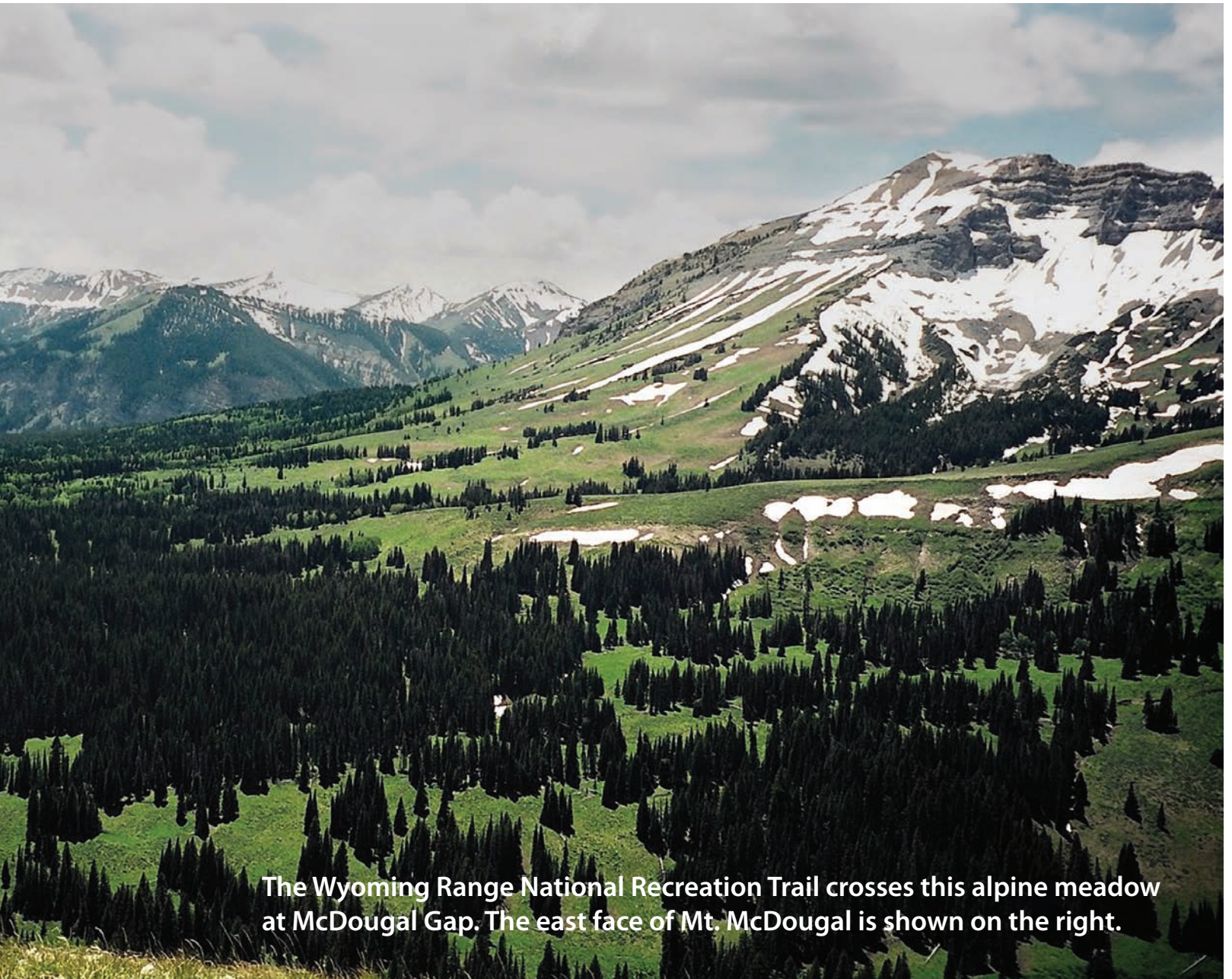


Many of these values are impossible to enter into a table or chart, though numbers speak loudly to certain points and are included in the following pages. Beyond the government and scientific reports used for this report, one of the best ways to assess the Wyoming Range is by talking to the people who know the area better than anyone else—and that's what this report aims to do.

On-the-ground research is the only way to find out what the range really means to the public. What you discover is that the Wyoming Range is a “favorite spot” for people from all walks of life, and that the response to the question, “What does the range mean to you?” crosses all political and socioeconomic boundaries.

Wildlife biologists, ranchers, hunters, campers, skiers, anglers, backpackers and snowmobilers value the Wyoming Range. They all have their own stories about these mountains. This report gives them a voice that will help community leaders, business people and policy makers determine the wealth of this area and better engage in its future management.

Ultimately, the Wyoming Range is at a crossroads as the oil and gas industry looks to these mountains to help satisfy our nation's hunger for energy. Leasing proposals are forcing us to weigh whether we value the Wyoming Range for its permanent resources, or for its energy potential. The following pages take a pulse of this special place, gathering and cataloguing the various attributes of this fascinating chain of mountains.



**The Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail crosses this alpine meadow at McDougal Gap. The east face of Mt. McDougal is shown on the right.**



## History: Exploration, Hard Work and Adventure

*“The area is so abundantly furnished with grass, timber, and pure water, with mountain streams abounding with fish, plains thronged with game...that it may be described as...an excellent and healthy immigrant road, over which individuals of small means may move with their families and herds of stock to the Pacific Coast in a single season, without loss.”*

*Frederick Lander, surveying Oregon Trail route across the Wyoming Range*

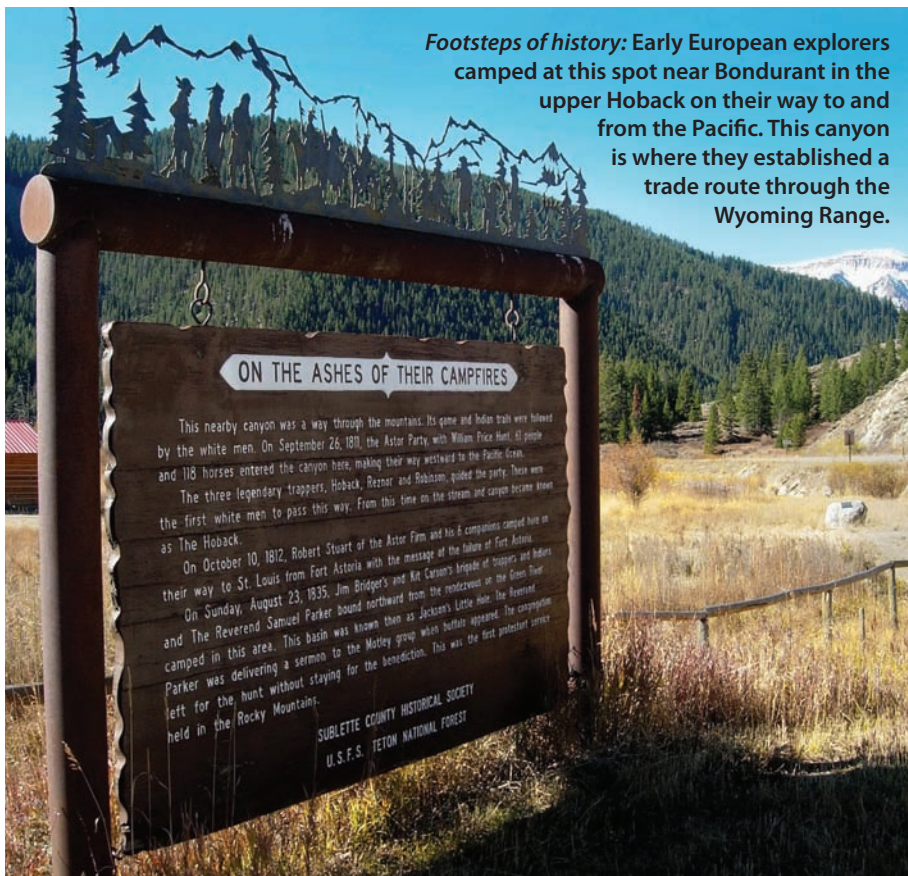
During the 1800s, the southern Wyoming Range was one of the country's greatest obstacles for emigrants headed west on the Oregon Trail. In 1857, Frederick Lander discovered an alternate route through the range at Thompson Pass between South Piney Creek and LaBarge Creek.

The Lander Cutoff, as the trail came to be known, became the first western wagon road commissioned by the federal government. During its first year, 13,000 immigrants took the cutoff, although many didn't make it. The trail's wheel ruts into the range remain evident to this day, but most of the dozens of pioneer graves along South Piney Creek are invisible. (Schoen, 1992).



Historic photos courtesy of the Sublette County Historic Preservation Board

**Footsteps of history: Early European explorers camped at this spot near Bondurant in the upper Hoback on their way to and from the Pacific. This canyon is where they established a trade route through the Wyoming Range.**



The Wyoming Range was home to humans long before these intrepid emigrants ventured through. Evidence of prehistoric use dates back at least 6,000 years, mostly as summer hunting grounds for elk, bighorn sheep and other wildlife. Prehistoric butchering areas, big game drivelines, stone circles, small campsites and other archeological sites used by ancient Americans dot the range's eastern foothills. Around 1700 A.D. the Shoshone tribe migrated into western Wyoming from the Great Basin and the Wyoming Range became part of the tribe's territory. (Schoen, 1992).

The first Europeans arrived in the 1820s, trappers and mountain men who took furs and beaver pelts from the range to trade at summer Rendezvous. For six years, trappers gathered at the confluence of Horse Creek and the Green River near present-day Daniel.

photo: Peter Aengst





Local residents still stage a pageant in Pinedale during the second week of July in tribute to those wild and rowdy Rendezvous days.

Eventually, the Wyoming Range became more than just part of a trail headed west. By the 1880s, small communities sprang up near the mountains, primarily supporting sheep and cattle ranches. Between 1910 and 1930, demands for timber to build railroads brought men known as tie-hackers into the Wyoming Range. These hardy souls cut timber and floated the logs down creeks into the Green River. Remains of tie-hacker villages still stand on the east side of the Wyoming Range on Pass Creek, North Horse Creek and South Cottonwood Creek. (Marsh, 1995).

The Wyoming Range continued to support nearby communities into the early 20th century. Small coal

mines operated at Deadman Creek, Blind Bull and on the east side of McDougal Gap. Water flowing from the mountains fed ranches and towns, and a dam at Middle Piney Lake supplied water for irrigation.

By the 1940s, word of the Wyoming Range's renowned big game hunting spread, supporting outfitters like the Box Y Ranch on the Greys River. Airplanes landed in the Greys area during the 1940s and 50s, delivering guests who would deplane wearing topcoats and dress clothes. Today, outfitting continues to be a way of life for many families in the communities surrounding the Wyoming Range.



## Sam Young, Jr.

### *Legendary Hunter of the Greys River*

Old-time hunter and trapper Sam Young Jr. lived year-round in the Wyoming Range for more than 50 years. Born on Aug. 5, 1913 in San Francisco, Young and his family lived all over with his Army father. The family eventually ended up in the Greys River Valley in 1927.

The Youngs built a log house on White Creek, the farthest point you could reach by road. They constructed their cabin from timber, employing the same building techniques as the early mountain men.

Life on the Greys was hard. As Sam Jr. would later recall, "there were two seasons on the Greys: July and August and winter." The family relied on rifle and trap to get them through their first winter in the mountains. Sam Jr.'s mother, Helen, was a gifted hunter, and her son quickly picked up her skills.

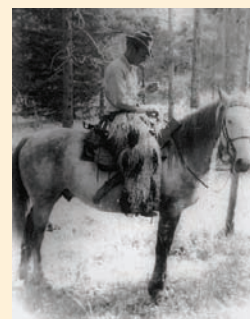
The Young family grew savvy at finding ways to put food on the table. They built 10-foot skis from pine and fashioned snowshoes from serviceberry limbs and buckskin thongs. They opened a small store and truck stop complete with a lunch counter to service two nearby coal mines. The family also acquired more property, including the now-famous Box Y Ranch.

Sam Jr. eventually took a job as a government hunter, a position he held for 13 years, stalking coyotes to protect the range's large domestic sheep herds. His reputation as an outdoorsmen grew.

Eventually, Young and his wife, Ila Thorton, purchased the Box Y from Sam's father and built a guest ranch, where they developed a successful outfitting business, specializing in bull elk and trophy mule deer. Nobody knew the country like Sam, and his hunting and fishing skills were known far and wide. According to one improbable story, Young once caught a cutthroat the size of a picnic table.

The family sold the Box Y in 1970, although Young spent his summers in the Greys area until shortly before his death in 1992. At age 70, the famed hunter and trapper could still be seen walking through the willow bottoms carrying two 50-pound beavers and a pack full of traps.

Source: "Men to Match Our Mountains" by Jay Lawson. *Wyoming Wildlife News*, July-August 2002.





## *Ecology:* **A Critical Link in a Great Ecological Chain**

**F**rom an ecological perspective, no place stands on its own. The boundaries we draw on maps mean nothing to the plants and animals living on the land. In reality, the Wyoming Range is part of a vast region known as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). This 19 million-acre area spreads out from the valleys, mountain ranges and plateaus surrounding and including Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. It spans 23 counties and parts of three states.

Considered one of the last intact temperate ecosystems on Earth, the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's wildlife populations are among the most healthy and intact anywhere in North America. Large carnivores still stalk the landscape, which remains home to all but one native species that existed when the first Europeans arrived. It is home to one of the last remaining grizzly populations in the lower 48 states and the last continuously wild buffalo herd in the country. The region also harbors the greatest concentration of elk in the world and celebrated coldwater fisheries (Noss, 2001).

At the southern reaches of this impressive ecosystem sits the Wyoming Range, providing terrain that is important to the ecology of the western United States. Though Yellowstone National Park certainly deserves the spotlight, lesser known places such as the Wyoming Range play significant roles in the GYE's overall health. Pieced together, these places are what make the Greater Yellowstone one of the world's great ecosystems.



### **A Diverse and Productive Habitat**

From dry sagebrush steppes, to rocky alpine summits and lush valleys filled with tall grass, the Wyoming Range features a wide range of habitat types. Douglas fir and lodgepole pine forests dominate its flanks, and stands of whitebark pine mark the timberline. Water flows from springs and high snowfields into meandering streams, willow flats and deep pools, creating important fisheries and riparian habitat.

This diversity in elevation and vegetation types makes prime habitat for plants and animals. Warm, moist monsoon air masses from the Gulf of Mexico rise over the Wyoming Range's high peaks, creating thundershowers almost daily in July and August (Noss, 2001). As a result, we see an abundance of aspen and willow, plant types that require lots of water during the summer growing season (Noss, 2001). Moose are among the species that benefit from aspen and willow habitat; so not surprisingly, the range contains some of the best moose habitat in Wyoming (Ryder, 2005).

Also present in the Wyoming Range is important habitat for large herds of elk, mule deer and antelope. The mountains are a critical link to the Upper Green River Valley, which spreads out from the range's south and east flanks. More than 100,000 big game animals congregate in the valley each winter. Many of the big game migrate into the Wyoming Range to birth their calves and fawns in the spring and disperse in summer, before returning to the valley ahead of the snow. A few bands of the valley's pronghorn make continental

photo: Windland Rice







photo: Lloyd Dorsey



photo: Jeff Hogan

America's longest big game migration.

Other species of wildlife flourish here. Black bear inhabit the Wyoming Range, as well as mountain lion, western boreal toads, pine martin and bighorn sheep.

Birds include bald eagles,

boreal, flammulated and Great gray owls, Harlequin ducks and peregrine falcons. Neotropical migrants, including ground nesting sparrows, mountain blue birds and tree swallows, flock to the Wyoming Range to rear their young. (Fralick, 2005).

The Wyoming Range is home to several animals on the federal Threatened and Endangered species lists, and the state of Wyoming has proposed several others for listing as Sensitive species. Bald eagles, peregrine falcons, whooping cranes, and Kendall Warm Springs Dace are listed as Endangered; grizzly bear and lynx are listed as Threatened; and Sensitive species include Colorado River and Bonneville cutthroat trout, as well as several species of plants.

Because the Wyoming Range is such a diverse and productive area, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has identified it as a "key habitat for species of greatest conservation need" (Oakleaf, 2005). As such, the range is a priority area for supporting populations that need healthy, intact habitat, including lynx.

The range is the most southern point in Wyoming with lynx. Tie-hacking in the early 1900s removed lodgepole pines of a certain size, producing thick undergrowth and leaving mature stands of trees for lynx and their primary food source, snowshoe hare. Although the range is ripe for lynx, only two were reported last year, according to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. But more of these elusive cats could be here, and the area is certainly a place where more lynx could inhabit in the future.

Recent sightings confirm that wolves are colonizing the Wyoming Range. And biologists believe that grizzly bear have a good chance of returning. "The Wyoming Range is the next place where grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem will go as the population continues to increase and expand," says Dr. Chris Servheen with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Wildlife Federation, 2004).

Biologists are also monitoring a female wolverine inhabiting the Salt River Range, the southernmost location supporting a female wolverine in recent years. Her home territory likely includes the Wyoming Range. Her reproduction and the dispersal of her young is important for wolverines' continued recovery into formerly occupied habitat further south, especially into Utah and Colorado (Inman, 2005).

As growth and development crowds into the western United States, we will look to the Wyoming Range as a place to sustain wildlife populations. These remote mountains still harbor highly productive plant communities and retain much of their natural integrity despite a long-standing human presence. Indeed the range's natural attributes are perhaps its greatest value—the bedrock supporting diverse human uses and enjoyment. Wildlife, clean water and healthy forests will prove to be even more valuable as we move ahead into an uncertain future for wild lands.

photo: Idaho Fish and Game Department





## Wildlife: Prime Habitat for Wyoming's Big Game

*"The best thing about the Wyoming Range is its diversity of habitat. It has good healthy animals and affords lots of different kinds of hunting. And the fall is a great time of year to be out there with the aspens and all that fresh air and Wyoming sunshine."*

*Tom Toman, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation*

When describing the Wyoming Range's values for big game species, biologists talk in superlatives. "The Wyoming Range has some of the finest wildlife habitat I've ever seen," says Game and Fish Department wildlife biologist Tom Ryder. "It's so productive and diverse."

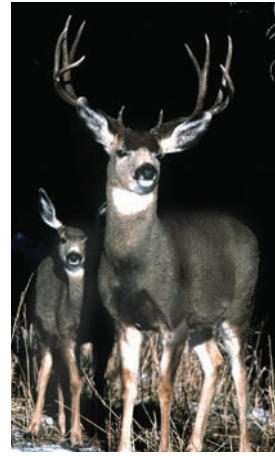
"From a big game perspective, the Wyoming Range is one of the best in Wyoming," says Scott Smith, a Wyoming Game and Fish biologist in Pinedale.

Clearly the Wyoming Range's lush and diverse habitat is ideal for supporting naturally-thriving big game populations. Summer storms move across the range and create a high-precipitation zone with a wide array of vegetation. Even in drought years, there's ample moisture for game. As a result, the range contains critical seasonal habitat for elk, mule deer and moose. An optimal mix of conifer cover and large expanses of unroaded habitat provides healthy sub-alpine and alpine forage.

Such productive plant life allows big game animals the

chance to enter winter with high fat reserves. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department evaluated body fat statewide on harvested deer seven years ago, assessing the animals' condition going into winter. According to Scott Smith, deer from the Wyoming Range had one to two inches of rump fat. "Every animal we checked was very fat and robust," says the biologist.

The range's exceptional habitat supports impressive big game herd



numbers. The Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd is one of the largest in North America in terms of the amount of land the herd inhabits (Fralick, 2005). Its target population is 50,000 animals, with 499,978 mule deer found statewide (Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 2005).

The Wyoming Range Moose Herd, a subpopulation of the Sublette Moose Herd (target population 5,500), is the largest subherd in the state. Statewide totals for moose were 10,804 in 2003 (Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 2005). Thus, almost half of the state's moose population inhabits the Wyoming Range. Furthermore, while moose populations have plummeted elsewhere in the state, they've thrived here.

The elk herds within the area include the Piney Herd (2,424 target population), and the Afton Herd (2,200 target population). The Hoback Herd (1,100 target population) and the Fall Creek Herd (4,392 target population) also inhabit some of the Wyoming Range. For comparison, statewide populations for elk were 92,293 animals in 2003 (Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 2005).

"If you were going to design elk habitat," says the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Tom Toman, "the Wyoming Range would be the perfect model." With its aspen component, the range's sagebrush steppes are important elk calving areas. The high mountains produce plentiful grasses for elk in the spring and summer; and in the winter elk can migrate a short distance to winter ranges on lower elevations. "It's one of those areas that has a little bit of everything," says Toman.

The Wyoming Range has also historically provided significant habitat for bighorn sheep, though proximity to domestic sheep has reduced their range to a small pocket in the southern part of the mountains. While the herd reached 100 animals or so in 1940s and 1950s, today 30 to 40 inhabit tough, rugged country year round.

photo: Jeff Hogan





## Watershed: A Safe Haven for Native Trout

*“If you look at the rest of the state of Wyoming in terms of habitat for Colorado River cutthroat trout, it’s really pretty pathetic. The Wyoming Range is the last stronghold for the Colorado River cutthroat.”*

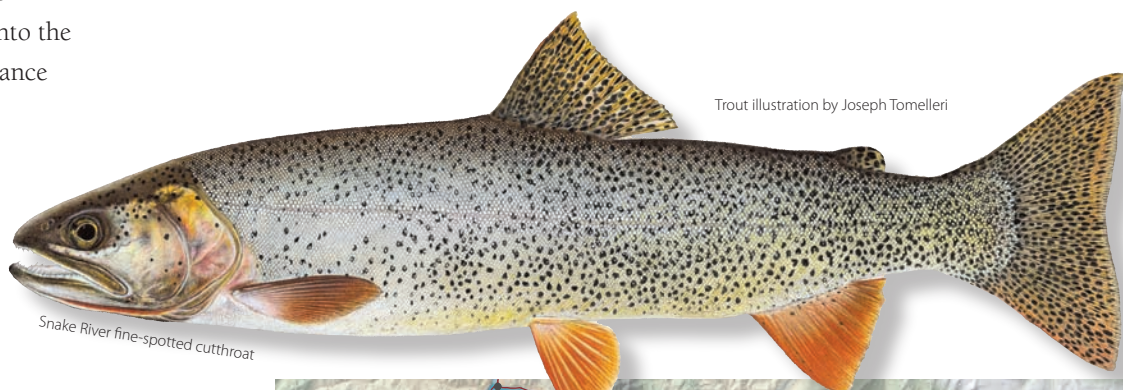
Joseph Neal, Fisheries Biologist, Bridger-Teton National Forest

The headwaters of three of the West’s great rivers—the Colorado, the Snake, the Bear—reach into the Wyoming Range, where an abundance of clean streams and lakes have created a safe refuge for our disappearing native cutthroat trout. Because the range divides these drainages, it is where four of the world’s 13 subspecies evolved. No other mountain range on earth can boast so many species of cutthroat, and nowhere in the West is there such a predominance of native trout (Bosse, 2005).

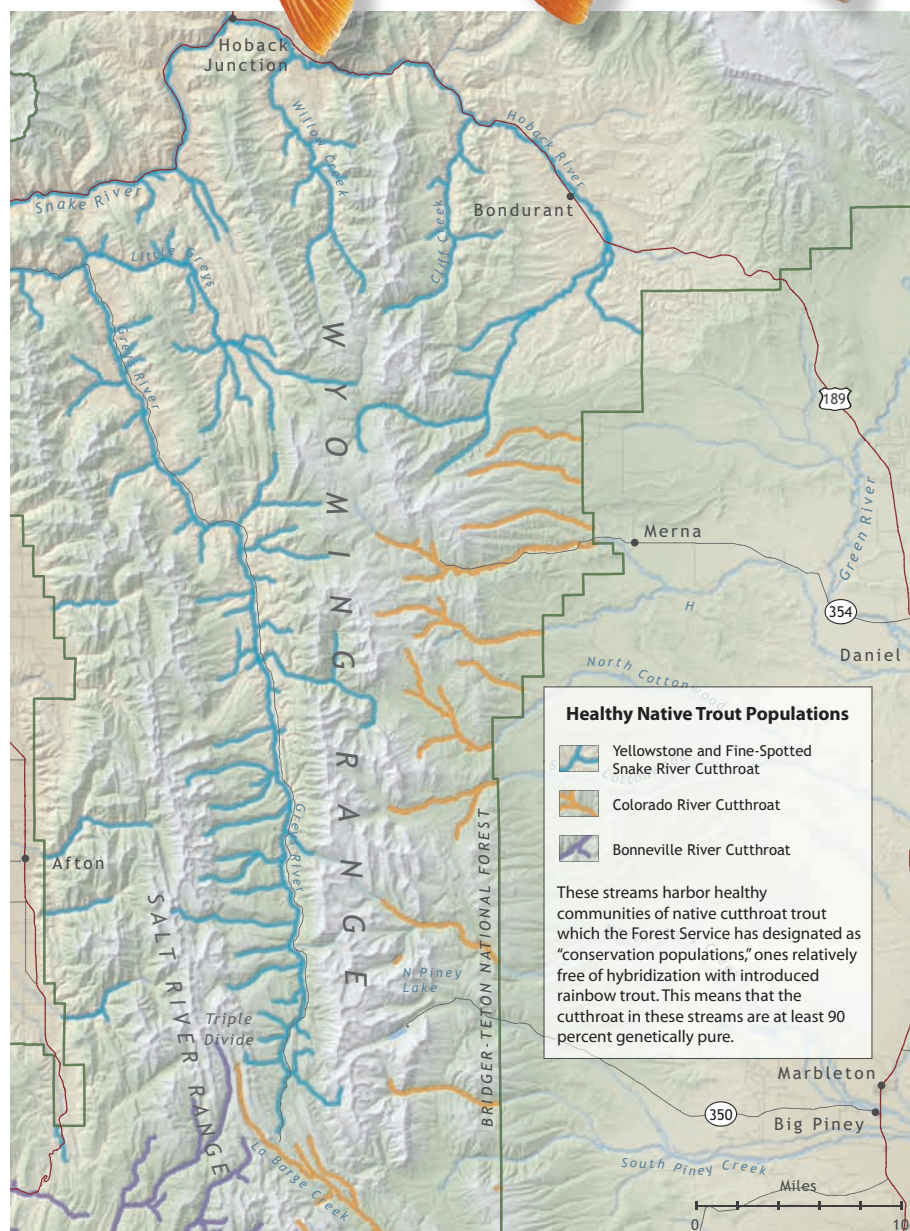
Healthy populations of Snake River fine-spotted and Yellowstone cutthroats share native waters in the Greys watershed, a Snake River tributary that drains the west side of the range. Bonneville cutthroat inhabit the range’s southern reaches in Bear River tributaries. Colorado River cutthroat, the most imperiled of these four subspecies, occupy tributaries flowing into the Upper Green River Valley to the east. The Wyoming range offers the best hope to recover this subspecies in the state, according to fisheries biologists (Neal, 2005).

Cutthroat persistence here is due to the range’s intact riparian habitats and the relative absence of introduced trout, especially on the range’s west slope. Habitat loss and stocking caused the loss of cutthroat from most of its native range across the West. Brook, rainbow and brown trout, non-native species stocked all over the West, tend to out-compete and displace native cutthroat. Grazing, logging and mining have degraded some streams on the Wyoming Range’s east slope and the Green River saw heavy trout stocking over the last century. But conservation populations of cutthroat have remained because introduced fish have yet to infiltrate the upper reaches of the Green tributaries, which are remote and protected by natural obstructions.

Today, fisheries officials place their hopes to recover Colorado River cutthroat as a subspecies on the Wyoming Range, the state’s best stronghold for this signature fish. One of the most ambitious cutthroat restoration projects in the West is underway on LaBarge Creek, a major Green tributary. The range’s North Piney Lake holds the cutthroat source population that biologists will utilize for these



Trout illustration by Joseph Tomelleri



Source: Bridger-Teton National Forest



restoration projects, according to Hilda Sexauer of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

## Wild and Scenic Streams in the Wyoming Range

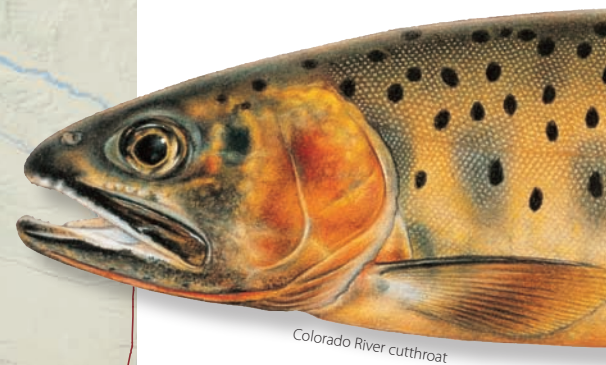
In addition to the values the Wyoming Range holds for native trout populations, the U.S. Forest Service recognizes that the mountains support waterways

special enough to potentially be given official “Wild and Scenic River” status.

In 1968, Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to protect the nation’s waterways. The intent of this system, which now protects some 11,338 miles of streams across the nation, is not to halt use, but to preserve these rivers’ character. Free-flowing river segments with strong wilderness, scenic or recreational

values may be considered for protection in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system, which so far includes just one Wyoming River, a 20-mile segment of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River northwest of Cody.

On the Bridger-Teton National Forest, the Forest Service has deemed nearly 700 miles of streams worth consideration for Wild and Scenic River classification. This includes more than 150 miles of streams in the Wyoming Range, including those stretches detailed in the table on page 13. The next step for these beautiful stretches is legislation that would give them official designation.



Source: Bridger-Teton National Forest



ELIGIBLE WILD AND SCENIC STREAMS IN THE WYOMING RANGE			
Stream	Stretch	Outstandingly Remarkable Values	Mileage
Greys River	Source to Palisades Reservoir	scenery, recreation, geology, wildlife	56
Little Greys River	Source to the confluence with the Greys	scenery, recreation	20
Hoback River	Headwaters	scenery, recreation, geology, wildlife	7
Cliff Creek	Source to Cliff Creek Falls	scenery, recreation	7
Marten Creek	Source to confluence with Greys River	scenery, recreation	4
Box Canyon Creek	Source to confluence with Greys River	scenery	4
Willow Creek	Source to confluence with Hoback River	recreation, wildlife	20
Bailey Creek	From the divide with Little Greys River north for 10 miles to the Snake River	geology, wildlife	10
North Piney Creek	Source to Lake Creek	scenery, recreation	7
LaBarge Creek	LaBarge Guard Station to Nameless Creek	history	10
South Fork of Fontenelle Creek	Source to Forest boundary	wildlife, scenery	10
Big Fall Creek	Source to confluence with LaBarge Creek	scenery, geology	4
Total Miles			159

Source: Bridger-Teton National Forest; National Park Service, Nationwide River Inventory

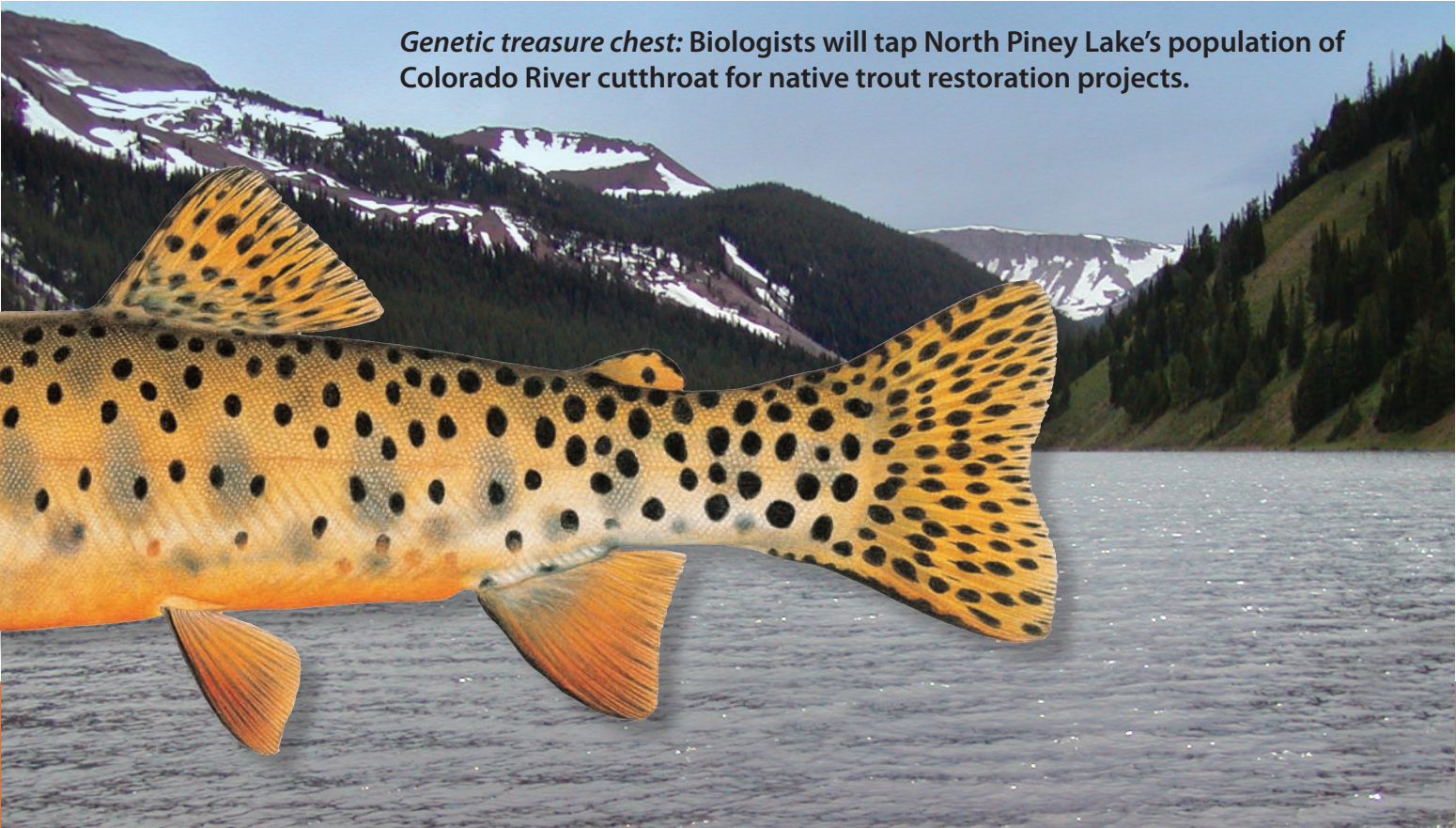


photo: Hilda Sexauer, Wyoming Game and Fish Department



## *Hunting and Fishing:* **A World Class Destination**

*"I've guided hunters who've hunted all over the world. And I've had them say that the only other place with such a high concentration of big game numbers is in Africa."*

*Steve Robertson, Rancher, Outfitter*

### **Supporting Wyoming's Best Big Game Hunting**

**T**he Wyoming Range is one of Wyoming's most popular destinations for big game hunting. Because of its healthy populations of mule deer, elk and moose, thousands of hunters from around the state—and around the world—flock to the Wyoming Range each fall, where many can count on spotting trophy-class animals. Such robust game, combined with large expanses of non-roaded areas and spectacular scenery, makes the range a world-class place to hunt.



The Greys River is one of the finest fishing and boating destinations in Wyoming, yet it remains relatively uncrowded.

### **Gordon Johnston**

**Hunter,  
Former Sublette County Commissioner**

For longtime Daniel resident Gordon Johnston, the Wyoming Range is all about family hunting traditions. He and his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons share a family hunting camp near Buck Creek they have visited each fall for more than 25 years.

At age 74, Johnston keeps a map of the Wyoming Range on his wall, with pins indicating each successful hunt. Blue pins are for elk, white for mule deer. "Whether I get an elk every year or not doesn't matter," Johnston says, looking at his map. "It's just a big part of my family life." During hunts, his camp usually has five tent campsites. After long days on horseback, everyone gathers around the campfire.

Johnston, who calls himself a conservative Republican, spent 12 years as a Sublette County Commissioner. During his political tenure, Johnston says he worked hard to protect the Wyoming Range as a place his family can continue to enjoy.

"There's only so much citizens can do," he says. "Policy makers refer to areas on a map as brown or yellow, but how do you explain that in the middle of all that is Buck Creek, MY hunting area?"

Johnston has worked and hunted in Sublette County for 54 years. "There are places I can ride that look just like they did when Jim Bridger was out here," the retired Marine officer says. "But they're hard to find now. There just aren't many places like that left in this country.

"When I visualize oil and gas development happening to the Wyoming Range, it bothers me what we're doing to a special part of our country. When it's gone, it's gone. My great grandchildren will never see this country as I was fortunate to see it. And that saddens me."



"I'd go there first," says Wyoming Game and Fish biologist Tom Ryder. "Anybody who's been in the Wyoming Range would rather hunt there than anywhere else."

The Wyoming Range is especially known for mule deer hunting. Severe winters have reduced the herd in recent years—and the resulting public outcry reveals the passion people have for these hunting grounds. Some residents have expressed concern that too many hunters will result in an over-harvest of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, especially with an increase in new hunters from southwest Wyoming's energy boom.

The Wyoming Range's popularity with hunters is evident in communities on both sides of the mountains. Hotels, restaurants, gas stations and shops fill up in the fall as residents and non-residents pass through on their way into the mountains. Several outfitters in Pinedale, Big Piney, Daniel, Bondurant and other towns rely on the Wyoming Range for business. The Bridger-Teton National Forests' Big Piney District issues permits to 20 different outfitters who use the range for guided trips. The Big Piney District estimates that an additional eight outfitters from Jackson and Afton do part of their outfitting, both hunting and fishing, in the range.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department divides the state into hunt areas and collects records on harvests





photo: Box Y Lodge and Guest Ranch

and success rates in each area. See table on page 16. When all of these figures are tallied for the elk, mule deer and moose in Wyoming Range hunt areas, close to 12,000 hunters were issued licenses in 2004 (Wyoming Game and Fish Department Annual Report, 2004).

As other hunting areas in Wyoming become more crowded—and more people move into the communities surrounding these mountains—the number of hunters who visit the range is certain to keep growing. And you cannot find a more passionate group of advocates for the Wyoming Range. Many return year after year with friends and family to stay at the same hunting camps and explore inspiring wild country. For them, the Wyoming Range provides the ultimate big game hunting experience.

## A Truly Unique Fishing Destination

The Wyoming Range is proof that size is not everything when it comes to trout fishing. Its fish might not be the biggest and fiercest fighters in Wyoming, but it is one of the few places where you can enjoy uncrowded, yet accessible streams in a spectacular landscape and catch a variety of native fish. The range harbors all four of the state's cutthroat subspecies, the native trout with the distinctive red slash mark under the gill. Head up the Greys River Road and you'll find countless places to pitch a tent and cast a fly. This is one of the few river basins still

blessed with a predominance of cutthroat, which are becoming increasingly rare elsewhere.

Unlike finicky rainbows and browns, neither native to Wyoming waters, cutthroat evolved in harsh climates with short feeding seasons. As a result, "cutts" are hardwired to strike virtually any bug-like object. It is not uncommon for a fly fisherman to pull 30 or 40 trout out of the Greys in a single day. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department celebrates the state's native trout diversity with its "Cutt-Slam" program, which awards a certificate to anglers who catch all four of Wyoming's native cutthroat subspecies: Snake River fine-spotted, Colorado River, Bonneville and Yellowstone. In theory, a skilled angler roaming around Triple Divide, the saddle on the range's southwestern crest, can reel in all four in a single afternoon. Nowhere else on earth is such a feat possible.

The Wyoming Range's fishing reputation remains overshadowed by the Snake River's world-class opportunities, where hordes of well-equipped out-of-town anglers ply the waters in fancy drift boats. But local trout lovers often prefer heading a little farther up the road into the Wyoming Range, where they can still count on creek hopping in solitude and finding a place to camp within earshot of babbling streams.

## Sam Sharp Angler

Avid fly-fisherman Sam Sharp's favorite place to fish is South Cottonwood Creek in the Wyoming Range. Why? "I think it's the best because the creek's been restored and now all of the fish that competed with the cutthroat species are gone. So you really have almost all Colorado River cutthroats there."



photo: Pinedale Roundup

South Cottonwood is a small creek, but Sharp says it can produce fish up to 18 inches long. "You can almost guarantee anybody will catch a fish. If you don't, something's wrong," says Sharp, an avid fly fisherman who grew up in Pinedale.

Sharp also enjoys fishing the Greys River on the west side of the Wyoming Range. There, he often catches Snake River fine-spotted cutthroat. For non-native fish, the retired teacher enjoys Middle Piney Creek, where he catches small rainbow trout.

"The Wyoming Range is just a nice place to fish," says Sharp. "More people know about the Wind River Mountains and so more fish over there. Fewer people know the Wyoming Range, so it's a great fishery and one of the reasons I live here."



Steve Robertson  
Outfitter

"I don't know where you'd go anywhere else in the country to equal the Wyoming Range," says long-time outfitter and rancher Steve Robertson. "It's just an incredible area for big game: antelope, mule deer, bighorn sheep, elk."



Robertson, who leases a ranch near Big Piney, estimates he has spent about 100 days a year in the Wyoming Range for the past 10 years. His family has been ranching and outfitting in the range for more than a century.

Both sides of Robertson's family helped settle Jackson Hole in the early 1900s. But he says the high, rugged country around the Wyoming Range is far superior. "The Wyoming Range provides some of the best hunting in the state," says Robertson. "It's critical to the stability of elk herds."

Over the years, Robertson has seen plenty of other wildlife. Lynx, whooping cranes, sandhill cranes, ducks, geese and other animals have crossed his path while riding the high country on horseback. A lot of the places Robertson has explored since his childhood can't be seen from any road.

"I've guided hunters who've hunted all over the world," says Robertson. "And I've had them say that the only other place with such a high concentration of big game numbers is in Africa."

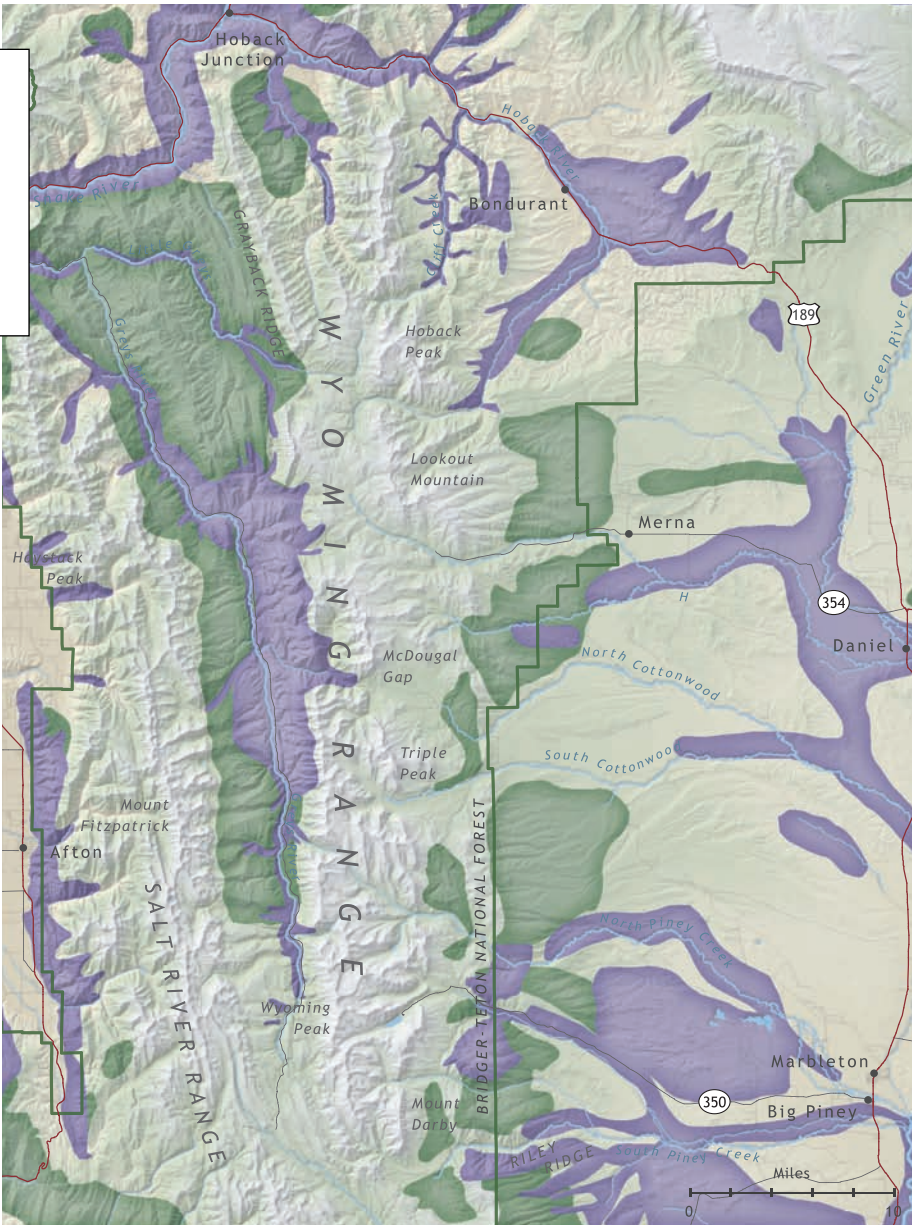
What does Robertson hope the future holds for the Wyoming Range? "I'd like to see it preserved if it can be," he says. "It's more important to me personally than professionally. The range is one of few places where you can get on your horse and get away from it all. When it's all gone, what's left? In any other country it would be a National Park."

**Big Game Habitat**

Crucial Winter Range

Calving / Fawning Areas

Crucial winter range and calving/fawning areas shown for mule deer, elk, and moose.



Source: Wyoming Game and Fish Department

HUNTING IN THE WYOMING RANGE: BIG GAME LEGALLY HARVESTED IN 2004 AND THE HUNT’S ECONOMIC RETURN TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES.					
Animal	Active Licenses/ Hunters	Harvest <sup>1</sup>	Success rate	Hunter-days <sup>2</sup>	Economic return <sup>3</sup>
Elk	4,537	1,414	30.18%	26,300	\$2,198,770
Mule Deer	7,344	2,521	34.40%	23,445	\$2,142,850
Moose	118	101	83%	885	\$94,940
Totals	11,999	4,036	33.63%	50,630	\$4,436,560

1 Harvest data represents the number of elk taken from hunt areas 89, 90, 92 and 94; mule deer from hunt areas 134, 135, 142, 143 and 144; and moose from hunt areas 23 and 24.

2 Wyoming Game and Fish 2004 Annual Report: Hunter days were calculated by multiplying the harvest total by the number of days wildlife officials calculated hunters spent in the field for every animal taken (18.6 for elk, 9.3 for mule deer, 7.5 for moose).

3 Economic return figures are based on dollar amounts the Wyoming Game and Fish attributes to each animal harvested in 2004, depending on the species: \$1,555 per elk; \$850 per mule deer; and \$940 per moose.



## Recreation: Western Wyoming's Outdoor Playground

*"This is another thing we have a lot of that people value: the chance to get off by themselves, to camp in an established site outside of a campground. Although the forest has more use every year, much of the visitation is by long-time visitors, and the places they frequent are very special to them,"*

*Susan Marsh, Bridger-Teton National Forest  
Recreation Staff Officer*

Viewed from U.S. 191 outside Pinedale, the Wyoming Range sits alone and disguised behind a vast expanse of sloping sagebrush hills. It's tempting to pass over these distant mountains with little notice, or let your eyes skip over them entirely. But those who come from afar to visit the Wyoming Range, or live in nearby communities, know better. For them the range is a year-round backdoor playground that offers just about every type of outdoor recreation.

Isolated, remote, rugged. These are the words visitors to the Wyoming Range use to describe this 150-mile stretch of western Wyoming. The range is part of the state's largest complex of roadless areas and has some of the West's most undiscovered backcountry. Few guidebooks direct travelers here and many local residents have for years considered it their "secret spot."

The Wyoming Range is the place to go to avoid the crowds that flock to the nearby Jackson area and Wind River Range. It's where the Pinedale Chamber of Commerce sends tourists who say they want

some quiet and solitude. The Wyoming Range offers something harder and harder to find these days: the ability to travel for miles and miles without bumping into another person.

### Varied Recreation Choices

Many who visit the Wyoming Range come to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life. Much of this visitation is by long-time visitors who treasure the places they return to year after year and don't want to see them changed.

One can travel off the beaten path with ease in the Wyoming Range, and part of the appeal for locals and visitors alike is the range's accessibility. Roads and trailheads link vast stretches of the range to nearby towns. This road system, largely created for timbering,

### A Wilderness Classroom in the Wyoming Range

The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), an international wilderness education organization, spends approximately 1000 user days a year in the Wyoming Range. Its students experience at least two weeks in the backcountry, learning about the environment, outdoor skills and how to lead a team.

In the summer months, students age 14 and 15 explore the rugged country near the Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail. In the wintertime, NOLS students master skiing techniques in the Wyoming Range's eastern drainages. These low-angle slopes provide skiers perfect terrain for learning to ski. While in the backcountry, students discover what it means to be on a truly remote expedition; they pull sleds and break trail through heavy snow, and dig out snow shelters to sleep in.

"The Wyoming Range is one of our better areas," says Abby Warner, who directs NOLS programs in the Wyoming Range. "You can feel more remote, there's a wider variety of terrain for students and plenty of water. It's this idyllic little mountain range that offers a bit of everything but isn't too daunting."

### Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail

Much of the 70-mile Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail—one of the longest trails in Wyoming—runs along the crest of the range at more than 9,000 feet in elevation. National Recreation Trails are designated by the Secretary of Interior or Agriculture to recognize exemplary trails of local and regional significance.

Most of the trail is closed to motorized vehicles, with one short segment between Lake and North Piney creeks open to trail bikes. The rest of the trail is for hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers. The trail summits Wyoming Peak, at 11,363 feet the highest point in the range. It begins in the north in Hoback Canyon at the Bryan Flat/Willow Creek area, and ends at the South Piney Creek Trailhead. The scenery here is hard to beat: stunning waterfalls, colorful sedimentary rock layers, and meadows filled with wildflowers during the summer months.

This landscape provides abundant wildlife habitat where backcountry visitors share the land with elk, moose, deer, black bear and antelope. Bring a good map—the trail is remote and some sections are hard to find. But that's part of the appeal of this stretch of high-mountain trail.



photo: Lloyd Dorsey



is now primarily used for recreation, including ORV use, scenic driving tours, accessing trailheads and dispersed camping. The roads near the range's margins are "hot spots" for recreation, places like Middle Piney Creek, Willow Creek, Cliff Creek and Greys River.

Whether you are basing out of an RV to fish and relax, or hiking out with a backpack for a solitary journey along the Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail, there's something for everyone in these mountains. It's a place for both hard-core outdoor folks and families with small kids.

Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, ORV riding, snowmobiling, skiing... This is truly a land of varied recreational use.

The range's ability to provide varied recreational options fills an important niche for visitors. In the Wyoming Range backcountry, people can camp without paying a fee, mountain bike and travel on motorized vehicles, even ski to winter shelters. These options will make the Wyoming Range more popular in the years to come, as our wild places increasingly become either restricted or industrialized to satisfy the nation's energy needs.

## Thomas Turiano

*Backcountry Skier, Climbing Guide,  
Author of Select Peaks of Greater Yellowstone*



The Wyoming Range's gentle slopes and rolling topography have been a destination for skier Thomas Turiano since the 1980s. With its quiet and solitude, the range offers Turiano a less-crowded feel than his home turf around Jackson. Great skiing comes with the range's dry high-desert air, which stays extremely cold and keeps snow in superb condition.

Turiano enjoys skiing Mt. McDougal, Triple, Hoback, Ramshorn and Wyoming peaks, as well as extended spring ski traverses along the range's crest.

"The enchantment of the Wyoming Range lies not in its vertical or technical nature. There is some magic in

this range that makes you hold your horses, look around, and breathe the crisp and cold high-desert air. The attraction of the Wyoming Range lies in its apparent simplicity, wide-open spaces, and the grounding you gain from a landscape in spatial equilibrium. Here, one can behold distinctive stripes and patches of pine and fir, and sweeping limestone cliffbands. One can visit forgotten summits, peaceful emerald pools, broad valleys, and some of the region's roughest quartzite talus. A climb or tour in the Wyoming Range is like a walk in the prairie with a native Wyoming rancher. What you do and how you do it doesn't matter. What matters is that you are at peace while you do it."

## Steve DiCenso

*Backcountry Enthusiast*

The Wyoming Range is Steve DiCenso's favorite place. Exploring here is why he moved to Alpine, Wyoming, a small town tucked into the range's northern boundary.

"I go out there every weekend," says DiCenso, a building contractor who works throughout western Wyoming. "I've been all over on my mountain bike—there's so much high country that's never seen bikes before."

For DiCenso, getting into the Wyoming Range is a quick trip up the Greys River on a well-maintained dirt road leading out of Alpine. "I can open my garage door and get right on my bike," he says. "It's so easy and close."

Although he is an avid mountain biker, DiCenso also enjoys recreation of the motorized variety, taking to the Wyoming Range on his snowmobile every winter. "Snowmobiling in the Wyoming Range is unbelievable," says DiCenso. "You can't beat it."

Many of DiCenso's adventures take him into remote terrain, mostly from McDougal Gap north to Bondurant. "The fishing here is phenomenal," DiCenso says. "I've caught some of the biggest fish in little streams below McDougal Gap."

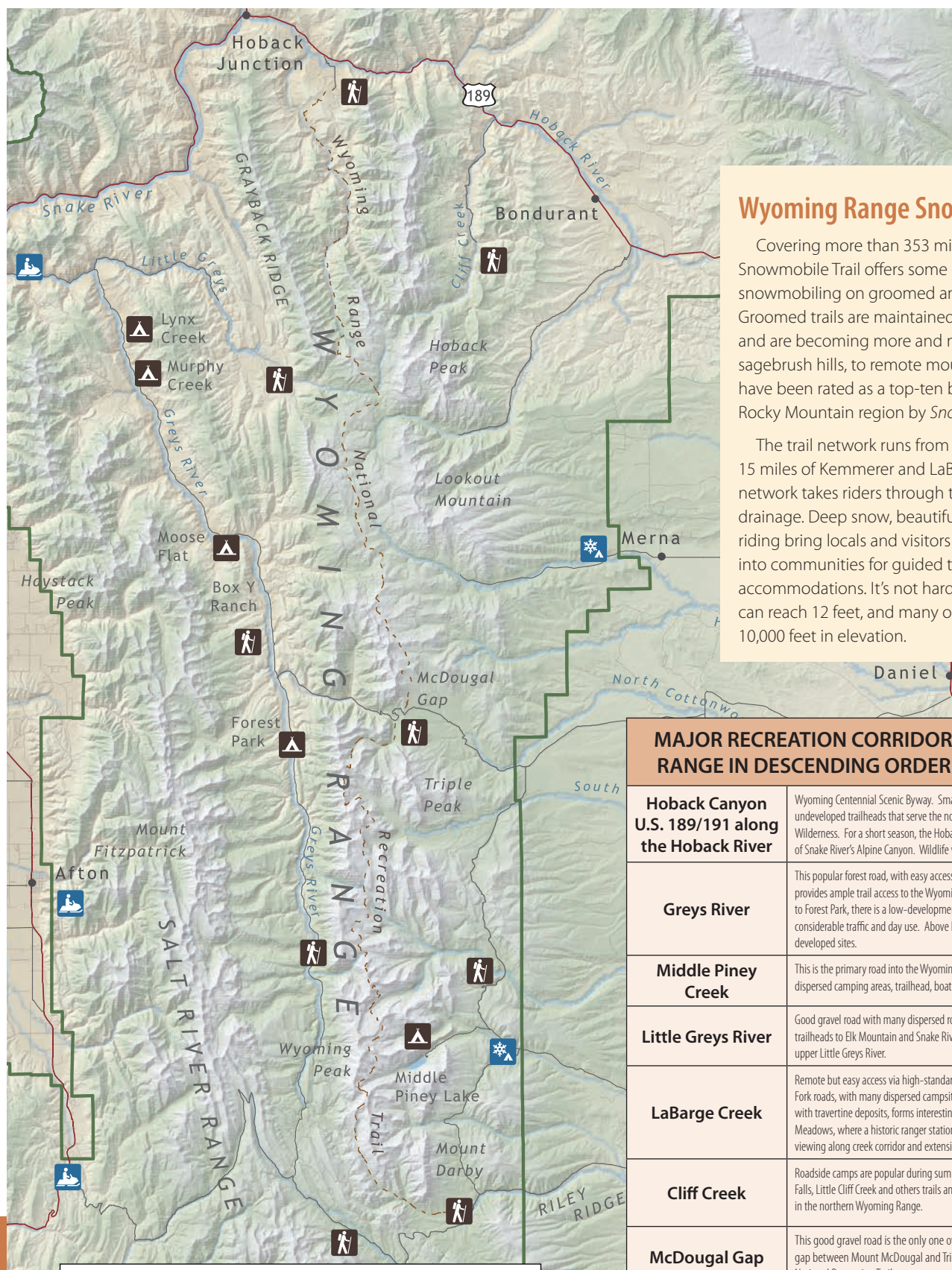
But DiCenso also recognizes the importance of the range's other uses. "When it comes to recreation, the Greys River area has everything for everyone. This place has more family access than any other National Forest. Every weekend, many of us locals go straight up into the mountains. Every single person lives here because of the beauty."

And that's something DiCenso does not want to see change. "I can't picture families wanting to camp up here anymore if there are drilling rigs. As soon as you see wells, you feel like you're not in a wild area anymore."



*"This is truly  
a land of varied  
recreational use."*





## Wyoming Range Snowmobile Trail

Covering more than 353 miles, the Wyoming Range Snowmobile Trail offers some of the world's most scenic snowmobiling on groomed and ungroomed trails. Groomed trails are maintained weekly and even daily, and are becoming more and more popular. From open sagebrush hills, to remote mountain passes, these trails have been rated as a top-ten best trail system in the Rocky Mountain region by *Snowest* magazine readers.





The trail network runs from Alpine to Afton, to within 15 miles of Kemmerer and LaBarge. This extensive trail network takes riders through the scenic Greys River drainage. Deep snow, beautiful scenery and fantastic riding bring locals and visitors onto the trails and into communities for guided trips, rentals, meals and accommodations. It's not hard to see why: snow depths can reach 12 feet, and many of the trails climb over 10,000 feet in elevation.

## MAJOR RECREATION CORRIDORS IN THE WYOMING RANGE IN DESCENDING ORDER OF DEVELOPMENT

<b>Hoback Canyon U.S. 189/191 along the Hoback River</b>	Wyoming Centennial Scenic Byway. Small but heavily used campgrounds, a few undeveloped trailheads that serve the northern Wyoming Range and Gros Ventre Wilderness. For a short season, the Hoback offers whitewater floating without the crowds of Snake River's Alpine Canyon. Wildlife viewing in several locations; bighorn winter range.
<b>Greys River</b>	This popular forest road, with easy access to the river, is a destination in its own right, but it provides ample trail access to the Wyoming and Salt River ranges. From Alpine upstream to Forest Park, there is a low-development campgrounds and dispersed campsites, considerable traffic and day use. Above Forest Park, the road narrows and there are no developed sites.
<b>Middle Piney Creek</b>	This is the primary road into the Wyoming Range from Big Piney, with developed and dispersed camping areas, trailhead, boating on Middle Piney Lake.
<b>Little Greys River</b>	Good gravel road with many dispersed roadside camps, no developed sites. Numerous trailheads to Elk Mountain and Snake River, Bailey Lake, Grayback Ridge, Middle Ridge and upper Little Greys River.
<b>LaBarge Creek</b>	Remote but easy access via high-standard road, through route with Greys River and Smiths Fork roads, with many dispersed campsites. Big Fall Creek, a unique cold water springs with travertine deposits, forms interesting waterfalls. Other attractions include LaBarge Meadows, where a historic ranger station still stands, Tri-basin Divide, and places for wildlife viewing along creek corridor and extensive willows.
<b>Cliff Creek</b>	Roadside camps are popular during summer and hunting season, with access to Cliff Creek Falls, Little Cliff Creek and others trails and views of Clause Peak and other scenic high points in the northern Wyoming Range.
<b>McDougal Gap</b>	This good gravel road is the only one over the Wyoming Range, passing through the gap between Mount McDougal and Triple Peak and crossing the Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail.
<b>Bare Pass</b>	This road through the eastern front of the Wyoming Range accesses trailheads, roadside camps and unique geological features such as Red Castles, connecting drainages of South Cottonwood to North Piney creeks.
<b>Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail</b>	The 70-mile trail, most of which is closed to motorized vehicles, follows the range's crest from Hoback Canyon to South Piney Creek, reaching its highest point at the 11,363-foot summit of Wyoming Peak.

### Recreation Features

Here is a sampling of trailheads, winter access points, campgrounds and other recreational amenities in the Wyoming Range.

-  Campground
-  Hiking Trail
-  Winter Access
-  Snowmobile Trail

Source: Bridger-Teton National Forest



## Roadless Areas: **Instilling a Sense of Place**

*“For me, hunting and fishing is synonymous with wildness. And wildness is only found in roadless/wilderness areas... Unroaded lands are the last bastions of what the world once was. Anything else is a poor imitation.”*

*Holly Endersby, Avid Hunter in the Rocky Mountain Region*

**T**he Wyoming Range is part of the largest complex of roadless areas in the state of Wyoming (Howell, 2005). It's hard to put into words the feeling of being in these wild stretches of land. For many, there's freedom that comes with traveling through a region of minor human influence, where the terrain and weather can be tough, and where the chance to feel absolute solitude abounds.

The term “roadless” is sometimes misinterpreted to mean closed to public use. It actually refers to patches of public land over 5,000 acres in size, without maintained roads, and with substantially natural surroundings. Roadless areas are ideal places for

hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, horseback riding and other recreational activities.

### **Promise of the Wild**

Many have referred to the human values of special landscapes like roadless areas as a “sense of place.” According to Susan Marsh with the Bridger-Teton National Forest, a sense of place “goes beyond scenic quality, recreation opportunities, and other factors...it is an important component of the culture and self-identity of a society...” (Marsh, 2005).

This “sense of place” abounds in roadless areas, perhaps because there's a vastness to these lands that make the hustle and bustle of everyday life seem long gone. Busy roads and cities are far, far away, and the sounds of nature dominate.

These factors combine to make roadless areas valuable for other reasons. Places in the Wyoming Range with minimal human disturbance support the things people love most about the range—impressive big game herds, clean water with native cutthroat, and 100-mile views from peak summits.

### **South Wyoming Range Roadless Area (76,191 acres)**

The Wyoming Range's second largest roadless area is the South Wyoming Range, which extends from Sheep Creek to the southern end of the Wyoming Range and west to the the Greys River. This area is steep and rugged, with only a few trails. Sheep grazing and backcountry recreation are the primary uses of this area, including a motorized trail to Wyoming Peak. In all, this is an area of the range where tough country promises the experiences many people seek out in roadless areas, especially isolation and adventure in a place that feels wild.

### **Grayback Roadless Area (315,647 acres)**

The largest unroaded block of land in the Bridger-Teton National Forest, the Grayback Roadless area includes Grayback Ridge and all the contiguous roadless lands south to McDougal Gap.

Much of this Grayback country promises visitors remoteness and solitude. With the exception of popular hunting locations, you probably won't see another soul. Many who have traveled here feel it offers even more solitude than many designated Wilderness areas.

Grayback Ridge, where the headwaters of the Little Greys and Hoback rivers begin, has retained its untrammled appearance despite the presence of old cabins and the remnants of long-ago coal mining. The Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail passes through the Grayback Roadless area from Bryan Flat to McDougal Gap. Both Deadman Mountain and Hoback Peak also lie in its boundaries.

The Grayback Roadless area is not only a source of livelihood for those in nearby communities—it also contributes to their “sense of place,” a treasured landscape where experiences are truly valued as one-of-a-kind.

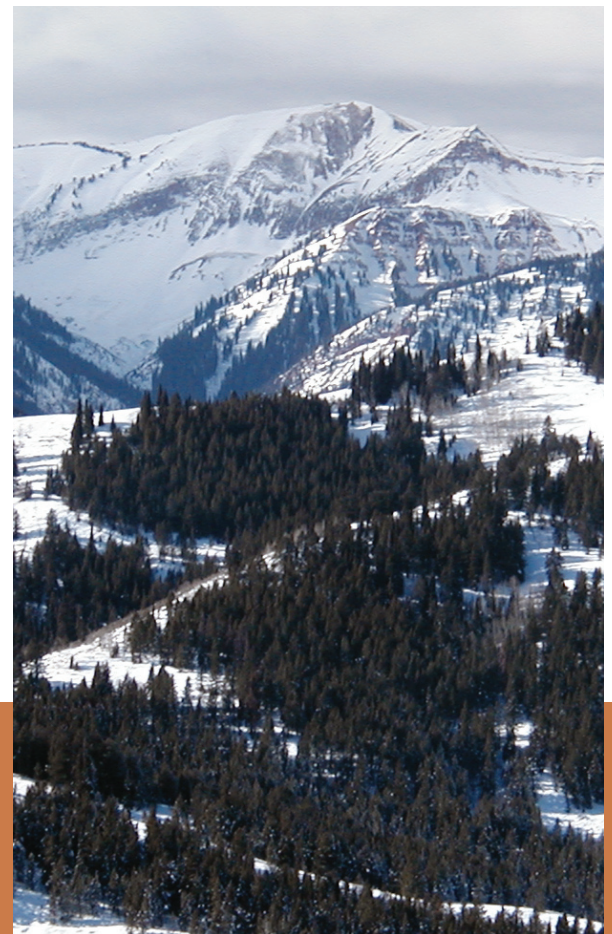
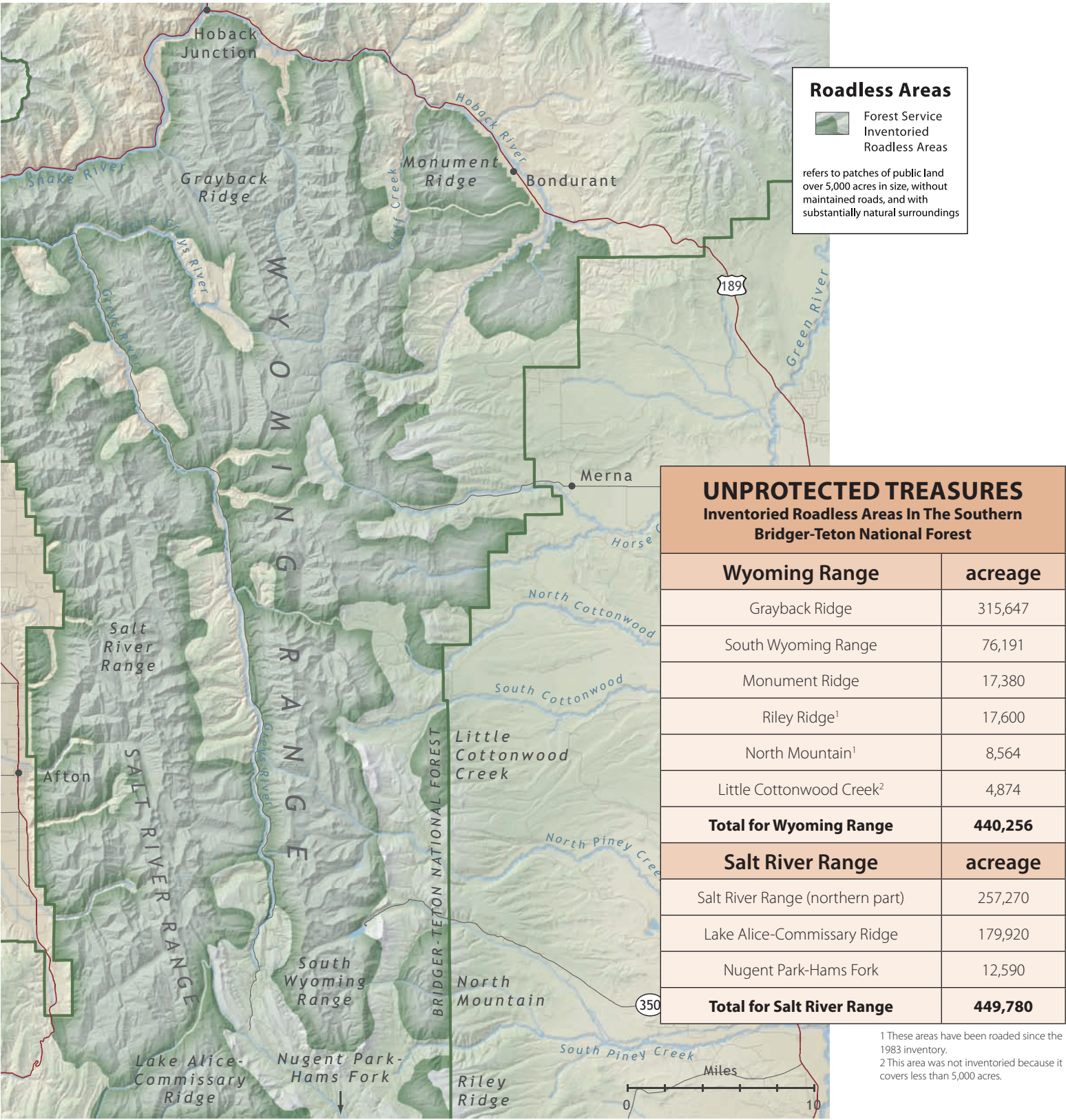


photo: Thomas Turiano





source: Bridger-Teton National Forest

“Places in the Wyoming Range with minimal human disturbance support the things people love most about the range—impressive big game herds, clean water with native cutthroat, and 100-mile views from peak summits.”



Economy: **The People’s Mountain Range**

*“Our economy is very tied to the mountains here. It’s part of what brings people into this area. If visitors are coming in, they’ll spend money. Even if they’re not staying overnight, they’ll still buy gas, eat and shop in our stores. Those mountains make us what we are.”*

*Karen Haberlie, Star Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Executive Director*

**Wyoming Businesses Rally to Protect Wyoming Range**

In a September 2004 letter to Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal, a group of Wyoming businesses cited the importance of the Wyoming Range to their operations. “Protecting these forestlands within the Wyoming Range means significant dollars to the state and local economies,” said the letter, which 25 businesses signed.

The signatures represented multiple communities and a broad spectrum of Wyoming’s economy, from an outdoor retailer, to a pizza restaurant, a log-home builder, even a chiropractor. This rally of support showed that the Wyoming Range has an enormous impact on the economic health of western Wyoming.

**People Who Share the Wyoming Range**

More than a dozen communities lie close to the Wyoming Range. Jackson is the largest, with a population of 8,647; and Daniel, on the east side of the range, is one of the smallest, with only 89 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Some towns, such as Bondurant in the range’s northeast corner, are still primarily ranching communities. Others, including Jackson and Pinedale, generate much of their revenue from tourism. The communities of Marbleton and LaBarge on the southern end of the Wyoming Range have become a home-base for workers in the Upper Green River Valley’s booming oil and gas industry.

One thing these diverse communities share is the Wyoming Range. The mountains are weaved into the lives of everybody who lives near them. Some residents make a living directly from the range as lodge operators, hotel or restaurant owners, or hunting, fishing, and snowmobile guides. Others enjoy the land on a more personal level, spending time with their families camping or hunting in their favorite places.

The Wyoming Range spans the boundary between Lincoln and Sublette counties. Lincoln County covers 4,089 square miles and Sublette County contains 4,936 square miles. With all this land, both counties have extremely low population densities. Sublette County is one of the least populated areas in Wyoming, with just 1.2 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

This low population density is one of the main draws for people living near the Wyoming Range. Fewer people mean more space to enjoy. The Pinedale Chamber of Commerce refers to the Wyoming Range as “one of the most quiet, spectacular areas of our region.”

This solitude is a boon for local residents. Anita Bartosh, who works at the Town Hall in Marbleton, a small town near the Wyoming Range’s eastern slope,

*Travel is a growing part of Wyoming’s economic picture, accounting for \$2 billion in direct expenditures and supporting 28,640 jobs in 2004. This spending has increased nearly 5 percent a year since 1997. This table breaks down travel-related spending and jobs in Sublette County, where expenditures have nearly doubled in the last seven years.*

TRAVEL SPENDING IN SUBLETTE COUNTY (in millions of dollars)			
	1997	2000	2004
Accommodations	2.2	3.1	6.5
Food and Beverage	4.8	5.8	9.2
Food Stores	1.7	2.0	2.9
Transportation	2.8	3.6	4.7
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	3.9	4.6	6.7
Retail Sales	3.6	4.3	5.6
Total travel spending	19.0	23.4	35.6
TRAVEL-RELATED JOBS IN SUBLETTE COUNTY			
Accommodations and Food Service	220	240	350
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	80	80	120
Retail	80	80	110
Transportation	10	10	0
Total travel related jobs	390	410	580
SALES TAX RECEIPTS FROM TRAVEL SPENDING			
Total sales tax receipts	\$700,000	\$900,000	\$1.4 million

source: Dean Runyan Associates



says that on the weekends everyone heads up into the mountains. “You name it, we do it up in the Wyoming Range,” Bartosh says. “We fish, hunt, snowmobile... It’s one of the reasons we all live here.”

## An Agricultural Heritage

For more than a century, the Wyoming Range has seen significant agricultural use. Today, the range continues to support an active ranching lifestyle in nearby communities. On the range’s east side, for example, the Big Piney Ranger District manages grazing from Beaver Rim down to Riley Ridge just south of South Piney Creek.

The Big Piney Range District contains nine cow allotments and three sheep allotments, with total cattle grazing acreage at 137,758 and sheep grazing at 35,379 acres. Some 6,537 cattle and 3,451 domestic

## Box Y Lodge and Guest Ranch

The Box Y Lodge and Guest Ranch sits 30 miles up the well-traveled Greys River Road from Alpine, Wyoming. The ranch has been a popular jumping-off point for people visiting the Wyoming Range since the 1940s, and its owners are quick to point out the importance of these mountains to their business.

“We wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the Wyoming Range,” says owner Cindy Haberberger. “It’s where we take our guests, who think the scenery here is very beautiful.”

The Box Y’s guests visit from all over the world, but especially from the Intermountain West. In the summer months, they come for horseback riding and fishing. Haberberger says summer business is steadily growing, almost outdoing hunting as the ranch’s busiest season. In the winter, the ranch mostly hosts guests taking to the popular Wyoming Range Snowmobile Trail.

“The Wyoming Range provides a ton of recreational use for us from a business standpoint,” says Haberberger. “But the range is important from a personal perspective, too.”



photo: courtesy of Box Y Lodge and Guest Ranch

**Outfitting and guiding are key businesses that draw visitors into the Wyoming Range and tourist dollars into Wyoming.**





sheep are permitted in the district. (Big Piney Ranger District, USFS). Ranchers depend on these summer ranges to round out their operations.

An Important Economic Resource

In addition to the social values local residents place on the Wyoming Range, the mountains contribute to the economy. According to a recent report developed for the Wyoming Business Council, earnings generated by travel spending in Sublette County reached \$12.5 million in 2004. In Lincoln County, the report estimates travel earnings of \$10.2 million. (Dean Runyan Associates report, 2005).

The report indicated that travel spending is clearly on the rise in Wyoming. Adjusted for inflation, spending has increased 2.2 percent each year since 1997, making travel Wyoming’s second-largest industry. Sublette County saw the state’s highest average annual change in travel spending, increasing by 9.3 percent since 1997. The county also led the way in employment and earnings generated from travel, again the highest increase of any county in the state.

In Lincoln County, travel spending has increased by 5.1 percent a year since 1997, generating earnings that have increased 3.4 percent since 1997.

Most of these dollars are coming from hotel, motel and bed and breakfast accommodations. Though oil and gas development in recent years has also contributed to increased motel revenues, accommodations are also filling with people visiting Sublette and Lincoln counties to enjoy the outdoors. While data specific to revenue generated from the Wyoming Range doesn’t exist, these mountains offer one of the most desired

places to recreate in both counties and are a major draw for visitors.

In addition, the recreational activities that are plentiful in the Wyoming Range also directly contribute to the state’s economic health. For example, the American Sportfishing Association reports that the economic impact of fishing in Wyoming is significant. In 2001, retail sales in Wyoming related to fishing totaled more than \$221 million. In that same year, the economic “output” due to fishing in the state exceeded \$326 million. Fishing accounted for \$60 million in wages and salaries, 3,395 jobs and over \$9 million in sales and fuel taxes. (American Sportfishing Association, 2001).

The Wyoming Range also boasts world-class big game hunting. In 2004, almost 12,000 hunters were issued licenses for elk, mule deer and moose in the Wyoming Range. The economic return from their harvests totals more than \$4 million for local economies. (Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 2004).

What all these figures show is that the Wyoming Range offers a sustainable and ever-increasing revenue source for the communities that lie in its shadows. As the numbers indicate, the public’s desire to escape to the mountains for solitude and recreation is only going to intensify in the years to come.

WILDLIFE-RELATED ECONOMIC BENEFITS IN BRIDGER-TETON NATIONAL FOREST, 2004	
hunting by species	
Pronghorn	\$390,742
Black Bear	\$695,518
Mule Deer	\$6,257,518
Elk	\$8,940,530
Moose	\$565,833
Mountain Goat	\$2,390
Sheep	\$165,209
Total hunting	\$17,017,811
Total angling	\$9,170,414
Total wildlife watching	\$24,774,061
Total wildlife expenditures	\$50,962,286
WILDLIFE RELATED JOBS	
Hunting jobs	378
Fishing jobs	142
Wildlife watching jobs	613
Total wildlife-related jobs	1,132

source: Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Triple Peak Ranch

The Triple Peak Ranch on the Wyoming Range’s eastern flanks calls itself the perfect destination for visitors craving a taste of the real Old West. The year-around operation provides a “real cowboy adventure” for guests. A working cattle ranch since 1950, the Triple Peak opened its doors to guests in 2001 and has been steadily growing since then.

Activities at the ranch range from guided fishing pack trips, to “cow” camps where guests play cowboy for awhile, and big game hunting in the fall. All of the ranch’s activities base out of the Wyoming Range.

Owner Toni David says that visitors like the fact that the Wyoming Range isn’t overrun. “The Wind River Mountains are really heavily used,” she says. “Besides hunting season it’s very quiet up there. In our estimate it’s a place people come for getting away. The range is just exceptional. We depend on it.”



# *Oil and Gas:* **Energy Development in the Wyoming Range**

**T**hough isolated and wild, the Wyoming Range may soon get caught up in the debate over how to address our nation's thirst for oil and gas. During the past decade, the energy industry has drilled wells at breakneck speed in the sage-covered mesas and foothills east of the range. From the air, the Wyoming Range appears overlooked compared to the Upper Green River Valley, with its ever-expanding network of roads, pipelines and well pads. But this may change.

The Wyoming Range and its surrounding country lie within the Overthrust Belt, a vast geological formation containing potentially large amounts of natural gas. With natural gas prices reaching historic highs and demand projected to increase by as much as 40 percent by 2025 (Mitchell, 2005), there is a strong push to develop western Wyoming's energy resources. In response, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is poised to authorize thousands of new wells in the nearby Pinedale Anticline, Jonah and other gas fields in the Upper Green.

## **Forest Service Unveils Leasing Plan**

In 2004, the Forest Service unveiled a plan to lease 175,000 acres in the heart of the Wyoming Range, stretching from Cliff Creek in Hoback Canyon to McDougal Gap and beyond to South Piney Creek. This proposal covered roadless terrain prized for recreational use.

Though there was no comment period, the public made its voice heard. Business leaders joined policy makers, including Wyoming Senator Craig Thomas and Governor Dave Freudenthal, to oppose the large-scale leasing proposal.

As a result of this public outcry, the Forest Service withdrew this leasing plan. In April 2005 it came out with a new plan to lease 44,600 acres, all in roaded areas. Officials hope to offer these leases through several auctions starting in late 2005. The bulk of these proposed leases cover a contiguous block of the Wyoming Range foothills around the Horse and Beaver Creek drainages west of Merna. Additional parcels border existing oil and gas fields near North and South Cottonwood creeks and Riley Ridge.

## **Leases Raise Concerns**

Although the revised plan is an improvement for those

who care about the Wyoming Range, the scaled-back leasing plan still raises serious concerns. Oil and gas companies already hold leases on 150,587 acres in the Wyoming Range, most of them in the northern roadless core of the range. Many of these leases are "under suspension," meaning that the 10-year expiration clock on them is stopped while development remains on hold. But the suspensions will likely be lifted once the Forest Service resumes selling leases. As a result, much of the northern part of the Wyoming Range, including leased roadless areas in Cliff Creek and the Hoback drainage, could soon be targeted for drilling.

## **Momentum for Drilling Builds**

Besides the Forest Service's proposed 44,600-acre lease package, other attempts to drill are in the works. Already a Houston-based company has proposed three wildcat wells in a tributary to the Hoback River, about six miles southeast of Bondurant. And some development is already under way on the range's eastern foothills, where fields such as Riley Ridge and Big Piney-LaBarge have been producing natural gas for years. Meanwhile, the 31,000-acre South Piney project has been proposed for BLM and private lands along the Bridger-Teton National Forest boundary west of Big Piney.

## **Why It Matters**

Expanded oil and gas development threatens areas in the range that harbor one of the region's last natural

photo: Lloyd Dorsey

**This land near Nylander Creek is among the 44,600 acres in the Wyoming Range the Bridger-Teton National Forest plans to lease in 2006.**





elk winter ranges and streams important for Colorado River cutthroat. Proposals also overlap with historic cattle country that continues to support an active ranching lifestyle. For example, the South Piney project would result in up to 210 coal bed methane wells and an extensive network of roads, pipelines, wastewater disposal and production facilities to service them on public and private “split estate” lands used by ranchers. (BLM, 2003).

Proposed leasing also threatens popular recreational destinations, such as McDougal Gap, where a scenic driving tour crosses the Wyoming Range, connecting Highway 189 with the Greys River Road near Alpine. The proposed lease area west of Merna is popular with snowmobilers, a key destination NOLS uses for its winter courses, and sits close to popular hunting areas and the Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail.

For the public, now is the time to voice concerns about drilling in the Wyoming Range. Leasing is an important first step on the way to oil and gas development—once an area is leased, the government is obligated to largely accommodate the leaseholder’s

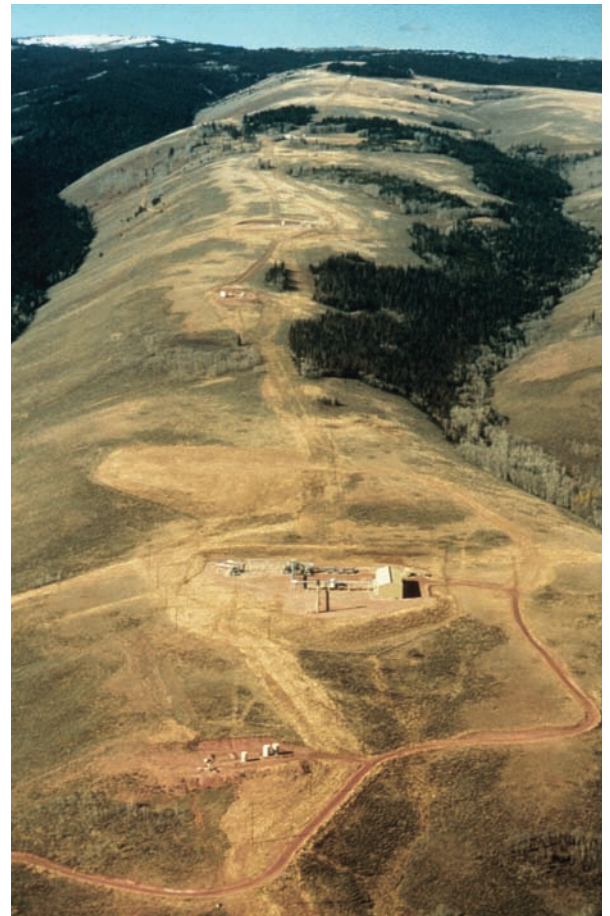


photo: Lloyd Dorsey

The Wyoming Range’s future?: This aerial photo shot in 1999 shows a portion of the Riley Ridge Project, approved for 238 natural gas wells in 1985 on lands administered by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Much of this gas field, which has yet to be fully developed, lies on a string of high elevation ridges off the southeast slope of the Wyoming Range.

## Andy Schwartz

### *Teton County Commissioner*

“All lands that have mineral resources under them are not created equal,” says Teton County Commissioner Andy Schwartz. As a public official, Schwartz realizes that mineral development is a part of life in western Wyoming. But the Jackson-based commissioner thinks the Wyoming Range has more to offer the people of Wyoming.

“In the Wyoming Range, there are other values that are more important than mineral development, like wildlife and recreational resources. In light of these values, I would say there are other areas more appropriate for drilling,” Schwartz says.

In 2004, Schwartz joined a group of public officials on a tour of the Wyoming Range to discuss oil and gas development. “We were able to talk about the range, and even though the group was diverse, there was consensus,” says Schwartz. “I don’t think many people were in favor of drilling once they’d seen the Wyoming Range.”

Schwartz is equally clear about what most people in Teton County think of drilling in the Wyoming Range. “When it comes to issues like this, it’s easy,” he says of his viewpoint that the range shouldn’t be drilled. “I can count on support from my constituents.”

For Schwartz, the bottom line is that not all places should be used to meet our nation’s energy problems. “When you look at what’s going on in Sublette County [Upper Green River Valley], there are a lot of other places you can drill with less potential for damage.”



right to drill. So the time to act is now, before leasing opens the door to development.

Things are changing in the Wyoming Range. And many who frequent these mountains aren’t aware of exactly what’s going on. In part, that’s because the Forest Service has yet to update its analysis and invite public comment on the proposed leasing that would make such development possible—leaving those who know the range best in the dark about its future.

Some who are aware of the lease plans shake their heads in disbelief, struggling to imagine the oil and gas industry tapping into the rugged and isolated Wyoming Range. But it only takes one look at other unlikely places in Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West, where full-scale gas development is now under way, to make skeptics think again.



## *Choosing a Future:* **Help Chart a Course for the Wyoming Range**

**W**ith major forces and changes at work in the West, the Wyoming Range hangs in a delicate balance, its future largely unknown. Will we proactively preserve the range's rare attributes, or will we let larger trends erode them away? Will these mountains remain a place of many values or will they be compromised to serve our nation's demanding energy needs?

Ultimately, the decision is up to you. As public land, the Wyoming Range belongs to all of us, but only those who voice their opinions will have a hand in its fate.

Now is the time to speak up. The Bridger-Teton National Forest has begun a multi-year process to revise its forest management plan. Measures that preserve the range's values for hunting, backpacking, ranching, snowmobiling and other outdoor activities could remain in place, or they could be taken away, depending on how involved the public is in the decision-making process.

Perhaps the most important attribute the Wyoming Range stands to lose is its position as a land of many uses. Here, important fisheries and ecological values blend with activities like grazing and outfitting to support a thriving economy. A visitor to the Wyoming Range can choose a variety of ways to get around the rugged high-country, from riding a snowmobile, driving an RV, peddling a mountain bike to hefting a heavy pack for a multi-day trip along the Wyoming Range National Recreation Trail. The options are as varied as the individuals who have come to love this isolated arm of mountains.

Some may argue that oil and gas development could fit in with these other uses. But a sizeable portion of the public feels otherwise. They argue that with more

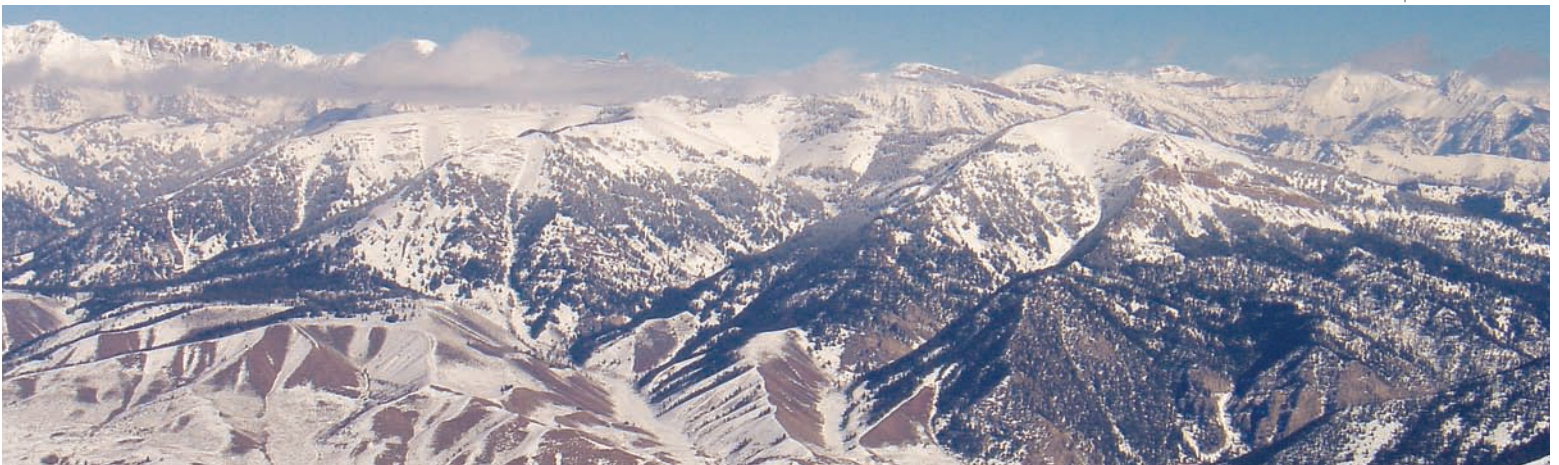
than 150,000 acres already under lease in the range, a proposed coal bed methane project on its flanks, and dozens of existing wells as well as proposed new wells, the Wyoming Range is already becoming an industrial resource.

*“Will these mountains remain a place of many values or will they be compromised to serve our nation’s demanding energy needs?”*

Right now, the Wyoming Range remains relatively undiscovered, so all these different public uses naturally balance each other out. But as the population in surrounding communities continues to grow, and industry looks to the Wyoming Range to develop new gas fields, what will happen to this balance? Will some uses outweigh others, causing the losses and restrictions that have affected other areas we know and love?

Ultimately, careful stewardship and active public involvement will sustain the Wyoming Range for future generations to experience. For these mountains, a terrible fate would be to head down a path that the public doesn't support, or worse yet, a path that cannot be reversed. As growth and drilling around the Wyoming Range barrels ahead, not one of us wants to find out we've spoken up too late to make any difference.

photo: Thomas Turiano





# Acknowledgements

The Wilderness Society is deeply grateful to The Aspenwood Foundation for funding the research that went into this project. The production of the report would not have been possible without the Foundation's assistance.

Nor would this report have been possible without the many people who shared their personal experiences or expertise on the Wyoming Range. From biologists explaining the science behind the Wyoming Range, to outdoor enthusiasts talking about their best days in the mountains, one-on-one interviews are what made this report real. So thanks to the following: Susan Marsh for her valuable "Visitor Guide to the Wyoming Range," and her overview on recreation; Steve DiCenso, Tom Turiano, Gordon Johnston, Sam Sharp and Steve Robertson for sharing their favorite Wyoming Range stories; Gary Fralick for his on-the-ground wildlife explanations; Scott Smith and Tom Ryder for valuable information on wildlife; Andy Schwartz for his thoughts on oil and gas development; Jay Lawson for his historical expertise; Scott Bosse for his knowledge of fisheries; and the Box Y and Triple Peak ranches for insights and photos of the Wyoming Range.

The quality of this report was greatly enhanced by the photographers and organizations that donated their images of wildlife, landscapes and trips into the Wyoming Range. Thanks goes to Steve DiCenso, Jeff Hogan of Hogan Films, Dan and Cindy Hartman of Wildlife Along the Rockies, Tom Murphy, Hilda Sexauer of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Lloyd Dorsey, Peter Aengst, Scott Bosse, Linda Baker, Gordon Johnston, Clint Gilchrist of the Sublette County Historic Preservation Board, the Idaho Fish and Game Department, National Outdoor Leadership School, the Pinedale Roundup and the Predator Conservation Alliance. Special thanks to Joseph Tomelleri for allowing the use of his rich illustrations of cutthroat trout and author Tom Turiano for his generosity with his mountain adventure photography.

Thanks also go to freelance writer Kerry Brophy who undertook the bulk of the research and writing of this report, Tim Schaub of CommEn Space who produced the report's maps, and Lan Weisberger of Design Solutions who designed and laid out the final product. Finally, this report would not have come together without the able oversight provided by Brian Maffly of the Wilderness Society.







## Sources

American Sportfishing Association. 2001. "2001 Economic Impact of Sportfishing," State Reports, available at [www.asafishing.org/content/statistics/economic/fres\\_fishing](http://www.asafishing.org/content/statistics/economic/fres_fishing).

Bosse, Scott. 2005. "Personal Interview November 2005." The Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman, Montana

Fralick, Gary. 2005. "Personal Interview September 2005." Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Pinedale, Wyoming

Howell, Liz. 2005. "Personal Interview November 2005." Wyoming Wilderness Association, Sheridan, Wyoming

Inman, Robert. "Personal Interview November 2005." Greater Yellowstone Wolverine Program. Ennis, Montana

Lawson, Jay. 2002. "Sam Young, Jr.: Legendary Hunter of the Greys River." *Wyoming Wildlife News*. July-August 2002.

Marsh, Susan. 2005. "The Wyoming Range: An Overview of the Recreational Resource." Bridger-Teton National Forest Service, Jackson, Wyoming

Marsh, Susan. 1995. *Visitor Guide to the Wyoming Range*. Grand Teton Natural History Association, Jackson, Wyoming

Mitchell, John G. 2005. "Tapping the Rockies." *National Geographic*. July 2005.

National Wildlife Federation. 2004. "Fact Sheet: Wyoming Range Allotment Complex." National Wildlife Federation, Missoula, Montana

Neal, Joe. 2005. "Personal Interview October 2005." Bridger Teton National Forest, Pinedale, Wyoming

Noss, R., Wuerthner, G., Vance-Borland, K., Carroll, C. "A Biological Conservation Assessment for the Utah-Wyoming Rocky Mountain Ecoregion: Report to the Nature Conservancy." Conservation Science, Inc., Corvallis, Oregon

Oakleaf, Bob. 2005. "Personal Interview October 2005." Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Lander, Wyoming

Ryder, Tom. 2005. "Personal Interview October 2005." Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Lander, Wyoming

Runyan, Dean. 2005. "The Economic Impact of Travel in Wyoming: 1997-2004." Dean Runyan Associates, Portland, Oregon

Schoen, Jamie. 1992. "Bridger National Forest, Western Part, Wyoming. Soil Survey Report 1992." Bridger-Teton National Forest Service, Jackson, Wyoming

Smith, Scott. "Personal Interview September 2005." Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Pinedale, Wyoming

Toman, Tom. "Personal Interview October 2005." Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Missoula, Montana

Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2005. "Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy." Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2005. "Wyoming Game and Fish Department Annual Report 2004." Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne, Wyoming

U.S. Census Bureau. 2000. Data available at <http://www.census.gov>





The Wyoming Range remains a priceless repository of natural and recreational values. Native cutthroat trout, free-flowing streams, big game and the range's alpine ridges provide the kinds of experiences that make Wyoming the envy of the nation.

But today, public land managers are considering whether to dedicate more of the Wyoming Range to energy extraction. With your help we can sustain the health of the wildlife, scenery and outdoor opportunities found here in the state's namesake mountains.



## THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

1615 M Street, Northwest • Washington, D.C. 20036

[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org)

(202) 833-2300 • Fax (202) 429-8443

FOR QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THIS REPORT CONTACT:

Northern Rockies Regional Office  
503 W. Mendenhall • Bozeman, Montana 59715  
(406) 586-1600 • Fax (406) 586-4700  
[bozeman@tws.org](mailto:bozeman@tws.org)